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Mothermonsters and fatherfigures

By John Bayley

 E. E. CUMMINGS:
Complete Poems
1910-1962

 925pp. Two volumes.
Granada Publishing. £40.
0 246 10974 2

 RICHARD S. KENNEDY:
Dreams in the Mirror
A Biography of E. E. Cummings
528pp. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation.
0 87140 638 1

American poetry has two traditions: open and closed. The first may well be the mutated offspring of the styles of poetry shipped ever wholesale, at one time or another, from England; the second represents the more or less systematic repudiation of those ready-made poetics by the developing American consciousness. "Closed" poetry is in fact usually much more original in technique and tense than "open" poetry, and it reveals its ancestry only in its degree of encapsulation. Its idiom is self-defining; it does not merge with or enter other poetic areas; it cannot breed, and can hardly even metamorphose.

The immense and various achievements of American poetry owe much to the difference between these two traditions, and to their possible modes of combination. Robert Frost might be said to write a closed sort of poetry that looks as if it were open: the style of the first deviously and beautifully works to give the impression of the second. Something altogether more complex but not wholly dissimilar seems to be taking place in the poetry of Wallace Stevens and John Berryman. But the boldness of American poetry is towards the previously undefined and unexpressed, although poets of the open tradition - Robinson Jeffers, Robert Lowell (who at moments can sound so strangely like him), William Carlos Williams, A. R. Ammons, John Ashbery - are not only obvious heirs of Whitman but are, as it were, on the best of terms with the laborious traditions and hermetic practices of closed poetry: they are as familiar with Emily Dickinson as they are with Ezra Pound, and with Edwin Arlington Robinson, John

Crowe Ransom, Marianne Moore and E. E. Cummings as well.

What do not pass from one tradition to the other are the sense and the uses of time. "Closed" poets may have long careers - some of the longest, steepest and most prolific - but time seems to stand still for them (and so for their readers). They do not, like the two spectral poets in the waning dusk of *Little Gidding*, "urge the mind to afterthought and foresight". Again, the cause may be essentially historical. In 1867 Henry Timrod composed an "Ode for the Commemoration of the Fallen":

Sleep, angels, hither from the skies!
There is no holier spot of ground
Than where defeated warriors lie,
By mourning beauty crowned!

The hemely "spot" does not prevent the poetry from slipping effortlessly, and very revealingly, into the English idiom of more than a hundred years earlier, the commemorative idiom of Collins. But there is nothing derivative or old-fashioned about the sound of it: it ignores time, standing in its own endowment outside it. The Timrod syndrome, as we might call it, is surprisingly endemic in closed American poetry; an idiom, once fixed (and no matter where it comes from), has its own special place. English and European poetry, by contrast, is a great deal more corporate and collective, moving all together when it moves at all. And Cummings offers a striking example of the Timrod syndrome in a very different guise: he too can tranquilly ignore what is going on outside his own self-occupied enclosure, imperious to fate and history, of which contemporaries like his friend Allen Tate, and the younger generation of Robert Lowell, were so wonderfully aware. No poetry could be less closed than the "Ode to the Centenary Dead".

Turn your eyes to the immoderate past,
Turn to the inscrutable infinity rising
Demons out of the earth - they will not
lest.

It is the implicit claim of American open poetry not "to last", but to be here in just that state of instability and turmoil which, as it does also in Lowell's "For the Union Dead", joins the personal to the public chimera, the predicament of now to that of the past.

Such poetry is its own continuing

drawn, and also an index of changing awareness. Inside their own closed idiom a John Crowe Ransom or an E. E. Cummings can do almost anything, provided they do not reveal themselves to be sensitive to outside possibilities. The poems they make must not show signs of wanting to be "understood". Ransom perceived this very well: "little helpless", as Cummings's first wife called him, did not. The wife, Elaine Thayer, also made the memorable comment: "I don't like people who want to be understood". A perpetual child, Cummings did like to be understood, and his charm made his friends eager to help

and protect him. But in his best poems he is absorbed, like a good child in its toys, and isn't in the least concerned with understanding. The analogy is exact, for the reader must get down with the poet among the building blocks on the floor; it is no good meeting him when he is charming the grown-ups - especially the merc sentimental ones - with his cute ways. Auden once wrote that "in grow up does not mean to outgrow either childhood or adolescence but to make use of them in an adult way." By this criterion Cummings's poetic techniques are designed to perpetuate adolescence, both in the poetry and the poet.

Most good poets suffer for their gift and use it to make such suffering visible - to write out the nature of it is to enlarge it readily. Cummings uses the gift to retain and maximize the insulation of a happy childhood. Poetry is his toy, but not "his toy, his dream, his rest", as it was for Berryman and Lowell, the plotted and cultivated scenario of an otherwise distracted existence. It is a paradox that although Cummings's typographical dodges seem to be drawing attention to themselves they in fact come off best when they are at their least self-conscious. The poems that are admissible in *Thipsy* and *Chimney* (published in 1922, a memorable year in literary annals) are the series of "Actualities" and "Post Impressions". Sexual experience with ladies like Muriel and Lil provided Cummings with the perfect subject for his format: detachment in comic physical involvement, the agilely precarious recording of experience and appearances, even as the poet lies passive in the sleazy, clumsy, but not hostile machine which he is laboriously manipulating. Experience, particularly sexual experience, is like a new American mechanism to be sprightly mastered (as in that splendid poem "the being Brand") and the poet in the happiest way is both operator and passive recorder.

All his life Cummings was able to write such poems, but they alternate with the winsome and folksy type which became more common as time went on. Here his best technique goes bad on him: artful verbalization emphasizes rather than makes cliché, as it often does in the poetry of Dylan Thomas, with which Cummings's has many affinities. But what suits the rhymed sentences of *Patience*. Strong sounds worse than banal in the arrangement of such virtuoso:

the trick of finding what you didn't lose
existing's tricky: but to live's a gift!
the teachable imposture of always
arriving at the place you never left

A poem from Cummings's juvenilia borrows Keats's thrush:

Music is sweet from the thrush's throat!
Oh little thrush
With the holy noise,
Like a lookieup of God in a sick-room's
hush

My soul you crush.
That is engaging, but the nete is still being struck fifty years later,

"e purple finch
please tell me why
this summer world (and you and i
who love so much to live) must die"

Finches, unlike thrushes, do not in fact sing; but this special bird, "eagerly sweet carolling", informs the poet that it would not be able to do so if it had anything to tell him. The early thrush poem seems an honest effort, but the purple finch has acquired a style quite incongruous with what it is required to say.

The young Cummings was clearly very bright and quick to learn, but unlike his master Pound he has no real intellectual curiosity, and little wish to understand other sorts of art than the ones he could make use of. Unlike most good poets he was inarticulate in a critical context. His attempt in the 1920s to write about T. S. Eliot's poetry for the *Dial* had to be rejected after he had produced a few comments on the level of "this is one of the few huge fragilities before which comment is disgusting". His prefaces to his collections make embarrassing reading, and are not unlike Dylan Thomas's comments on his own verse. In the 1950s Cummings too became a great draw on the poetry-reading circuit, his Peter Pan charm making a special appeal to girl students. But he was happiest writing away in the Wendy house at Patish Place, Greenwich Village, or at Joy Farm, the New Hampshire holiday home of his parents.

In a political sense he was equally

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naive. He had met and admired Aragon in Europe, and in 1931 translated his laborious (and unpunctuated) long poem *Front Rouge*: it is hard to say whether the translation or the original is the more enigmatic today. Cummings's own visit to the Soviet Union where he had no one to look after him, was such a chapter of minor accidents and misfortunes that he does not seem to have had time for any of the larger statements of retrospective admiration or disillusion customary among writers at the time: he was too busy recording the minutiae of what happened to him. Late in life, in 1956, he produced a little poem about the martyrdom of Hungary which must have brought a blush for poetry to the cheek of W. H. Auden, if he ever read it (it is instructive to compare Auden's own succinct poetic comment on the event: "The ogre does what ogres can..."). On the other hand the poem beginning:

16 heures
L'Étoile
the communists have fine eyes

is highly memorable because it uniquely and effectively registers a chaotic, child's-eye impression of the genuine Cummings sort. It is the difference between the private and public face, the public and private comment. Poets march against the bomb and make their own protests, but Cummings's public announcement that he could "never forgive" President Truman for dropping the bombs was merely absurd. It sounds like a small boy who says he will never forgive you for sneaking off with his pencil sharpener. After which he would soon recover what Cummings artlessly referred to as his "natural buoyancy of spirits".

Not unnaturally, father-figures were important to Cummings. His own father was a remarkable man, a self-made Baptist minister who became influential in cultural circles in Cambridge and Boston and well known throughout the United States for his writings and the causes he sponsored. He also made a fair amount of money. He was obsessively devoted to his son, to whose interests as an artist he devoted himself tirelessly; but he was also anxious to keep Cummings permanently captive in the family on a regular allowance. Cummings had to escape from this overpowering solicitude, but he never escaped very far, and he always hero-worshipped his father ("He is a famous man whereas I am a small eye poet") and ran for help to him in crises. He was also very close to a warm and sympathetic mother, the closer after his father, motoring up to New Hampshire, was killed by a train on a level-crossing in a snowstorm: his mother survived with a fractured skull.

This oedipal experience finally liberated Cummings, and significantly stabilized his own private life. Of his three beautiful wives the only one who responded to and got on with his mother was the third, Marion Morehouse, an ex-model and failed actress, and she and Cummings remained happily married until his death, in 1962. Elaine Thayer, his first wife, was also socially the grandest, a demurely dazzling little rich girl, married to the young millionaire dilettante Scofield Thayer, who admired Cummings's verses at Harvard, became his first patron, and sent a cheque for a thousand dollars for the celebration. Cummings wrote for his wedding. (Cummings senior was greatly displeased.) Thayer took an emancipated view of marriage, lived in a bachelor penthouse and neglected his wife, who inveigled Cummings into a kind of Petrus Pan and Wendy affair, as a result of which a daughter was born. After divorce, and remarriage to Cummings Elaine reverted to type and became disenchantedly tough-minded, soon going off with an Irish banker. For many years Cummings was denied access to his daughter, who grew up not knowing he was her father. Cummings wept from crying pain to find his second wife was a demonic lady who when in liquor, as she usually was, complained loudly and publicly about the small size of his penis.

These facts about Cummings's life are not unimportant given the time and the influence of his father-figures. They are not unimportant to the poet and his work, as we do

with most imaginative writers, that the life helps us to see more deeply into the art, to understand it better. This might be a sign that the art itself is inferior, but in Cummings's case we can hardly say that. Most bad art is an involuntary pastiche of what was going at the time: his is certainly not. He was a genuine original, like John Crowe Ransom, who has also recently been the subject of a big biography, Thomas Daniel Young's *Gentleman in a Distcoat*. The charm of both books is that they could in a sense have been written about anybody, and their accumulation of careful, often pedestrian detail is interesting in itself rather than for the light it throws upon the subjects. They are "pure" biographies, like an old-time Bradshaw. Ransom was of course different, a Southern gentleman, a scholar, a golfer, and a quietly devoted family man. A hood seems to cover his personality; nothing can be flushed out from the darkness under it, and - as in the case of Cummings's more conventionally rascally life - there was probably nothing much there. The main interest of Ransom's biography is in the group of critics and poets with whom he was associated.

With both, the talent for composing in a "closed" kind of poetry seems independent of the nature of the poet, even seems to act as a substitute for it. Both live in the ponderous past, encased in solid Victorian three-decker jobs which might have been composed about the time George Eliot died and bespoken by the family of an influential bishop. As we move on from winter ensembles to summer vacations ("there was some talk of their going again to Bangor that year but in the event they did not"), we marvel at the meticulousness of the research (Cummings's Aunt Jane left him seventeen thousand, four hundred and twenty three dollars and sixty four cents) and come to love it for its own sake. The tone, a little owlish in its reverence for the past, seems as appropriate to Cummings's vanished 1930s as art deco. It is with this sort of decorum that Richard S. Kennedy discovered for us that the Cummingses sometimes stayed in the summer with Max Eastman and his wife at Martha's Vineyard, and that the Eastmans had a private beach that allowed for nude bathing. Marion especially enjoyed it, for, proud of the beauty of her body, she liked to share it with intimate friends. A grainy photograph shows nice faces, teeth and smiles, but discreetly cuts out anything below them.

Even Cummings's experiences in France in the First World War - experiences that led to the writing of *The Enormous Room* - become part of the family archive. His duties were limited to washing down ambulances behind the lines, and even there he behaved so irresponsibly that he and a fellow delinquent were sent to a detention centre for dubious foreigners and minor offenders. This was like a mad school, which suited Cummings exactly. He loved the misfits there - "delectable mountains" as he calls them - and his lively account of the place is still highly readable. Despite the occasional tedium of the macaronic style, his vision of experimental innocence still survives while *Three Soldiers*, the more painstaking war novel by Cummings's friend Dos Passos, has become hardly more than a curiosity.

At its best, *The Enormous Room* has the clear ebullient vividness which Cummings got from his hero Joyce in 1918. His of *Ulysses* were appearing in *The Little Review* where he found them shortly after he had also discovered Pound. The poem which came as a revelation to him was *The Return* ("Slow on the leash, pallid the least-meat") and he wrote soon afterwards a poem which, however much it owes to the classical aura of Pound, Eliot, and Imagism, is unmistakably his own.

Tumbling hair
pucker of buttocks
dandelions violet
And the big bulging dables
through the field wonderful
with eyes a little sorry.
Another came, also picking flowers

The iconography of the Dis and the Persephone story, (themselves a father-daughter incestuous marriage) they have been a part of the poet and his work, as we do

ing in the classics - a considerably better one than Pound - and a good teacher had encouraged him to attempt translations, both free and exact. His technical breakthrough, which still owed much to Pound and was probably not consciously arrived at, was the discovery that the same idiom would fit any situation. Joyce's grand style adapted itself deliberately to the meanest context, and Cummings's miniatures learned to do the same. A simple example is one of the "Portraits" in *Tulips and Chimneys*, "I walked the boulevard":

I saw a dirty child
skating on noisy wheels of joy
pathetic dress fluttering
behind her a mother-monster
with red gumbling face
cluttered in pursuit
pleasantly elephantine
while nearby the father
a thick cheerful man
with majestic bulbous lips
and forlorn pigish hands
joked to a girlish whore
with busy rhythmic mouth
and silly purple eyelids
of how she was with child

There is here the same dependence on a "closed" kind of poetry which marks all Cummings's successful poetic contraptions, though the point may build up in the poem's shape and not be sprung in the last line. There are contexts like the "war" poems and the semi-political squibs where such a point will not work, and where Cummings's cute cursory innocence does not answer. But point can come in the form of an excellent descriptive conceit, like the sky in "Impressions IV", first resolved "by the correct fingers of April" into "a cluster of trite jewels".

now like a moth with stumbling
wings flutters and flops along the
grass collides with trees and
houses and finally
butts into the river
Himself a painter and draughtsman, though of no great originality or power, Cummings at his verbal best often suggests the painterly techniques of the Impressionists and post-Impressionists and their admiration for Japanese art. His verse in fact is at its best when it draws attention not to its own words but to the picture they are bringing into existence. That is the kind of observation that would mean nothing in connection with most poetry, but with Cummings there can be a real sense of space between the words on the page

and the mental images evoked. In the best poems, and the ones that best stand re-reading, we seem to slip straight into the mental images. The zesty verbal capers, anthology pieces such as "anyone lived in a pretty how town", have a short reading life: their verbal substance is not of the kind that survives prolonged acquaintance. The poetry is at its worst when the verbal and sentimental are made to play engaging games together, as in "my father moved through dooms of love" or "sons of unless and children of almost".

This indicates a matter of great importance in relation to Joyce's verbal art. *Finnegans Wake* not only remains wholly and eerily alive but it can move us deeply in the simplest way. Joyce has in a sense found the modern way of doing what Dickens did in relation to crossing-sweepers and the deaths of children and Barak going out with the tide and David Copperfield's vision of his mother holding up her baby in her arms. Cummings often seems to be looking for the modern way of doing such things, and not finding it. It is of course invidious to compare a great writer with a minor verbal artist, but the point is that the less a valid one. Cummings almost never moves us: he is his own child, too self-absorbed.

Almost never, but he approaches tenderness sometimes, as in the "et cetera" poem, in which the word falls through successive slots of meaning - a way of dismissing sentiment, of pushing detail impatiently aside, evading parental exhortation, shrugging off oneself and one's dreams - until it falls into its final and tenderly intimate meaning, all the more tender and intimate for being a euphemism, and earning a capital letter.

(dreaming,
et
cetera,
of
your smile
eyes knees and of your Etcetera)

In general, though, Cummings has none of the artist's sensitivity to the outside world and to the reality of other people and their responses. Nothing shows this more clearly than a small poem which must upset friends and fellow artists, the non-Jews, as is the way with such things, more than the Jews themselves.

a kike is the most dangerous
machine as yet invented
by even yankee ingenu-
ity (out of a Jew, a few
dead dollars and some twisted laws)
it comes both priggish and canied

- "pricked and cunted" in the original version, which had to be bowdlerized when submitted to the *Quarterly Review of Literature*. It appeared in 1950 in the collection *Xaipe*, published by OUP after Cummings's American publishers had declined to continue making losses on his work.

Despite remonstrances Cummings insisted on including it, whipping out his smallboy reaction and protesting that a kike was not a Jew but an American hybrid, which was the point of the poem, and citing his recent experiences in Hollywood ("waiting wall for Christians") where he had endeared himself to no one and failed to obtain employment. Many Cummings poems, especially in the *Xaipe* volume, are whitely satirical, but to be effectively bitter a satirist must be involved. Memorable open poetry is subversive in its very nature, but no closed poetry cannot go out to subvert. Shock works like "kike" and "nigger" do not quite seem quaint, however, even in our unshockable era: liberal America minded them very much, and perhaps would still do so. The real trouble is that they point to something men - in both the American and the English sense - in the poet's satiric impulse. As his biographer shrewdly observes, Cummings could only see the world as directed at him and "emblematic" of his situation. So does everyone at times, poets particularly, but while poets like Yeats and Lowell return by this very process to the universal, Cummings remains in his own area of smallness.

Out of it come his own special effects, which are certainly like no one else's. He is a poet for do-it-yourself readers, and the best criticism of his poetry, like Norman Friedman's *E. E. Cummings: The Art of His Poetry*, takes a technical and structural line and gets down to close analysis of the typography. This collected edition is austere and beautifully produced, without notes or introduction, but these are not missed. There are felicities every few pages and once, in a while a whole poem that succeeds. Cummings's own way of treating the mythological flourished and persisted: one of the best of the poems that he wrote towards the end of his career, harking back to the Persephone piece, recounts the tale of Venus, Vulcan, and Mars, and the laughter of the gods when the lovers are taken in the artificer husband's web: my tragic tale concludes herewith: soldier, beware of Mrs Smith

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Participants and observers

By Keith Jeffery

LORD LONGFORD and ANN McHARDY
Ulster
260pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
£10.95.
0 297 77971 0

It has been remarked that if all the books written about Northern Ireland were placed end to end they might bridge the gap between Protestants and Catholics. Over the past thirteen unhappy years participants and observers have maintained a steady stream of material inspired by the current violence. Such has been the volume of writing that books are now commonly judged on whether they contain sensational revelations or propose miraculous new solutions. The virtues of this book are more modest. Covering well-trodden ground, and taking no dramatically original angle, it comprises a careful, and largely even-handed, narrative of the background and development of the Northern Ireland troubles.

As the authors sensibly observe, Ulster - by which for the most part they mean the six counties of Northern Ireland - cannot be treated in isolation. Particularly in the first half of the book, which covers the period from the early seventeenth century to 1969, they set the Northern Irish question firmly in the context of wider Irish and British political developments. Indeed, throughout the book the perspective adopted is primarily British. Considering the authors' own backgrounds - Longford, an Anglo-Irish peer with an active career in British politics, and McHardy, *The Guardian's* Belfast resident from 1977 to 1980 - this is perfectly understandable. Yet the result of such an approach is that they see the difficulties which British policy-makers have had to face more

acutely than the deficiencies of the policies adopted. In the chapters devoted to the Northern Ireland "statelet", Longford and McHardy are unduly kind to successive British governments who first ignored the province and then, from 1968, sought to employ reluctant Unionists as subcontractors, forcing Stormont publicly to wash not only its own dirty linen, but Westminster's as well.

The role of Britain in the early 1970s is sometimes misjudged. The authors underestimate the degree to which the insensitively tough security policies initiated by the incoming Conservative government in 1970 alienated Catholic opinion. They overestimate, as many have done, the Labour government's ability to break the 1974 Ulster Workers' Council strike which brought down the power-sharing executive. Nevertheless, they bring out well the British government's vacillations since direct rule, not so much of policy as of technique. Always anxious to establish some devolved administration broadly acceptable to both communities, but never quite sure whether to coerce or conciliate Northern Irish politicians, successive Secretaries of State have so far been unable to find a way out of the intransigence.

Although it pays some attention to the economic aspects of the Northern Ireland problem, especially the chronically weak industrial base and the concomitant long-term unemployment, Longford and McHardy's book is largely a political account of events, which, perhaps unintentionally, gives the misleading impression that all the important decisions are made by politicians. It is less perceptive when dealing with the myths and traditions, the "applied history", which separately sustain both Northern Irish communities. While clearly documenting the factors underlying nationalist aspirations - and republican terrorism - the authors explain loyalist and loyalist violence less

well. The bulk of the book paints a picture of the loyalists as incomprehensibly ungrateful and intractable. This is certainly the image which Paisley and his followers present, but their public political attitudes simply express their righteous belief that they are fighting for communal survival. Even more than nationalists, loyalists believe that they are engaged in a life-or-death struggle, and this belief fuels their persistent intransigence.

Longford and McHardy vividly illustrate the difficulties of penetrating Northern Ireland's social dynamics in a number of instances. The Unionist farmer who fired a warning shot over the heads of civil rights demonstrators - "varmint", he called them - and then kindly offered Anne McHardy a cup of tea, or the Protestant and Catholic members of the power-sharing executive together singing Irish ballads during the Sunningdale conference, perhaps tell us more about the province's crazy contradictions than a thousand words of political analysis. But missing from the book is a feel for the vitally important emotional dimension of Northern Irish politics, for the passions, not so much of politicians, as of the Protestant and Catholic communities en masse. Political leadership, as British administrators have despairingly discovered, barely exists in Northern Ireland, where politicians mostly confine themselves to transmitting historic group aspirations and mouthing traditional sectarian slogans. When they attempt to "lead", they are quickly brought back into line by the constituencies they represent. Paisley flirted with Humphrey Atkins's power-sharing political initiative in 1979-80 only for so long as his supporters believed that cooperation with the Irish Republic was not under discussion. The failure of John Hume's Social Democratic and Labour Party to put up candidates against the Provisional nominees, Bobby Sands and Owen

Carron, in the Fermanagh and South Tyrone by-elections last year was a similar, realistic concession to emotional grass-roots opinion.

The narrative ends somewhat gloomily in the summer of 1981, with no solution to the Maze prison hunger strikes immediately in prospect. Although at that time six strikers had died, and were followed by four more, the hunger strikes were called off in October. By the turn of the year the prospects for Northern Ireland were looking distinctly more hopeful. Nevertheless, the hunger strikes' legacy of increased sectarian tension and greater violence did much to harden attitudes on both sides of the communal divide. Longford and McHardy, however, rightly emphasize one positive recent development: the growing accord between London and Dublin. By all accounts British-Irish cooperation is beginning to pay off in security terms, and it may yet, more importantly, bring substantial and lasting political benefits by changing the overall framework of Northern Irish politics.

This theme is developed in a quite exceptionally good final chapter which splendidly summarizes the dilemma facing British - and Irish - policy-makers. Above all, and in contrast to the tone of the preceding chapters, it emphasizes that the million "beleaguered" Protestants are

"the key to the situation". Without a shift in Protestant attitudes, there can be no movement towards a long-term settlement. How such a shift might be obtained is a matter of some debate. The authors suggest that the common membership of both parts of Ireland in the EEC, and their similar economic interests, might force Unionists to identify more closely with Dublin than London. Another possibility would be for the British government to use its financial muscle and threaten to cut off its subsidy to Northern Ireland unless there was political compromise. More contentiously, it is argued that Britain should withdraw the "notorious" 1949 guarantee to Unionists that Ireland would not be re-united against their will. Whether the British government is likely to take such action - and whether it would do anything more than simply harden Protestant obduracy - is open to question. But the central point well made that in order to secure a political settlement in Northern Ireland, the British government, perhaps in cooperation with the Irish, will in some way have to accommodate the aspirations and contain the fears of the Protestant community. For more than a decade, on inability fully to appreciate this truth has fatally flawed the best efforts of British politicians to "solve" the Northern Ireland problem.

Lives of the convicts

By Roy Foster

BLANCHE M. TOUHILL:

William Smith O'Brien and his Irish Revolutionary Companions in Penal Exile
269pp. University of Missouri Press.
£16.80.
0 8262 0339 6

This is a bizarre chronicle: anecdotal, credulous and naive in the purest tradition of Lives of the Saints. In a sense this is inevitable, for Blanche M. Touhill excitedly takes at face value William Smith O'Brien's claim to be directly descended from Brian Boru and her historical analysis stops short at the Great Man theory of progression. "Ireland was then leaderless" recurs as an explanation of worrying halts in the righteous march of nationalism. The style is appropriately bathetic ("Mitchel was not just pleased, he was very pleased"); adjectives and infelicitous run riot, the Church of Ireland becoming "the Anglican Church" and *The Times* the *London Times*; words are artlessly invented ("hesitance", "Brittania", and, most pleasingly, "baronette"); inconsistencies abound (within twenty pages Patrick O'Donoghue is metamorphosed from "a clerk in a solicitor's office" to "a successful solicitor"). It is all reminiscent of a chronicle put together with unflagging but misdirected enthusiasm by a follower of Jacobus de Voragine.

The overall message of such a work might simply seem to be that the University of Missouri Press does not employ copy-editors; and this is a great pity. The men who tried to make the 1848 revolution were curiously ill-assorted, and their relations uneasy; the writings of Gavan Duffy and others have imposed a further distance between their lives and history. The story of their fortunes while transported to Tasmania (when it was still Van Diemen's Land) has some intrinsic interest, and rigorous analysis is needed of their professions, activities and beliefs (the latter ranging from Mitchell's full-on gospel of hatred to Smith O'Brien's constitutionalist faith in "the Queen, Lords and Commons of Ireland"). O'Brien himself expresses the contradictions of the gentleman revolutionary as well as of the propertyed Irishman; he has not had his historiographical due.

Professor Touhill does demonstrate the deliberateness with which newspapers and politicians tagged the 1848 affair with the "baggage"

patch" sobriquet (an exercise in defusing propaganda which the authorities in 1916 would have done well to remember); she also details O'Brien's struggles over his status with the Governor of Tasmania, Sir William Denison (later listed "sent forth to govern New South Wales"). O'Brien's own ideas, especially as set out in his later *Letters*, had a certain resonance; he floated notions of an alternative Irish assembly, as later practised by Sinn Féin, and he probably first gave formal currency not only to theories of genocidal intentions on the part of the government in 1846-7, but also of an expanding Irish population rate being reversed by the famine (only recently disputed by demographic analysis). His position as transported hero and his eventual pardon make up a classic Irish nationalist tale. In expressing what Ruth Dudley Edwards has trenchantly called the triumph of failure, it is eventually given the touch of apotheosis by the traditional dispute between family and followers over the hero's corpse. And yet his greatest sorrow on his arrival home (not recorded here) was to find his children speaking with Irish brogues.

The ambivalence of his position, however, is never fully treated by Touhill; nor is the significance of his companions' experience. The pity of it is that the story of their activities and disagreements in exile is so no further contains great comic possibilities. Their conceptions of "honour" regarding their tickets-of-leave varied wildly, from Meagher and O'Brien giving formal warnings of infestation, and engaging in gentlemanly games of Cowboys and Indians with the authorities, to O'Donoghue's head-headed and surreptitious absconding. They got drunk, they got lost, they quarrelled, they disapproved of each other's *mesalliances*. They took odd jobs ("meaningful work activities", Professor Touhill calls them). Funds raised for escaping seem to have been diverted into gold-prospecting schemes. "A money-making pack", commented one of their ladies, "who were not true to one another". All this took place against a background of antipodean picaresque, where twelve of the stoutest convicts on one newly arrived ship were at once conscripted to serve as "zouaves". It could make a raucous slice of historical pastiche, in the style of *The Sopwell Factory*, or it could follow the timeless achievement of E. H. Carr's *The Romantic Era*, played in a slightly different key. What the story cannot lend itself to is a rendering into breathless tale of saints and dragons, which is what we are presented with here.

Earning their corn

By Nesta Roberts



Four illustrations which appeared in the Ragged School Union Magazine, 1850: from the book reviewed on this page.

GILLIAN WAGNER:
Children of the Empire
284pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
£10.95.
0 297 78047 6

We cross the broad ocean with gladness
and grace;
And when in devotion we're bending
the knee.

This, this shall our Prayer be
At the close of each day.
God prosper the people
Who sent us away.

So, to the pages of the *Ragged School Union Magazine* in 1857, carolled the purities of children who, during the latter part of the nineteenth century and well into the first half of our own, were shipped out of Britain. They went, to quite from the same source.

To seek for employment
Where work can be found.
To meet with enjoyment
On less crowded ground
And also, according to the charitable and other agencies which despatched them, to escape from brutal and demoralizing backgrounds. But they were seen, too, as new citizens of Britain overseas, so many bricks for the building of the Empire.

It is difficult for us today to grasp the mystical devotion which, for decades, was inspired by the idea of that Empire. To a marked degree it inherited the oratory which, earlier, had gone into the Evangelical movement, and Evangelicals were prominent among those who, between 1870 and 1928, were responsible for sending some 100,000 children overseas.

If 1870 was the year when child emigration became a recognized movement, the principle had been long established. The British settlements in Virginia and New Zealand were no more than ten years old when the City of London sent a hundred pauper children to the new colony. The motives, clearly, were utilitarian rather than philanthropic. Land had to be stocked with people as well as cattle; around the same time the Virginia Company sent out three hundred tenants for its lands and gardens, a hundred young apprentices and a cargo of "young and uncorrupted maids to make wives to the inhabitants and by that means to make the more more settled and less moveable". The despatching of vagrant children to the American colonies and the West Indies continued through the seventeenth century. By the eighteenth the concept was more generally that of transportation for punishment. It was not until the nineteenth that social reformers battling against juvenile delinquency and such juvenile prisons as the vile ships *Belphégor* and *Euryalus*, ancient hulks

moored in the Thames, saw the hope of salvation in the wide, blue yonder.

The Brenton Asylum, the creation of Edward Brenton, a retired naval captain with ideas ahead of his time, who had called Euryalus "a floating Bastille", was concerned to teach its boys something of farm work and such relevant skills as grinding their own corn on hand mills before sending them to South Africa, and set up a committee in Cape Town to oversee their welfare. Though the *Tipperary Vindicator* likened the Irish orphans who were sent to Australia to Circassian slaves, those "great white women like ivory the turks sell in the streets", the Irish Poor Law Commissioners shipped out more than 4,000 girls over two years. The *Guardians* of St Pancras made impeccable arrangements for the welfare of the children whom they sent to the Bermudas, each equipped with a pound of soap, a Bible, Prayer Book and half a crown in cash, besides a generous trousseau, but omitted to get permission from the Poor Law Board, or to bring the children before the Justices to give their consent. As a result, the whole proceeding was judged illegal, though even the Board's Inspector found the scheme "excellent in every way".

Those enterprises, with others like the parties of boys which Shaftesbury's Ragged School Union sent overseas, were ripples foretelling the great wave of child emigration which gathered only grew during the last few decades of the century, to reach its crest in the early 1900s. For "child", in some instances, one might read "infant". The members of the first party of seventy-five little girls whom Maria Rye took across the Atlantic, to be fostered or adopted into "good Christian homes", ranged in age from four to twelve years old. Miss Rye, an immensely able and also an opinionated and generally impossible woman, had earlier run the Female Middle Class Emigration Society in a fashion which caused the senior Canadian emigration agent in Britain to say that she was not a philanthropist but "a passenger agent of the sharpest description". She soon realized that the most profitable and trouble-free way to emigrate children was to take them from the workhouse, so that the Boards of Guardians would be responsible for them until they were eighteen. Her books hardly bore inspection and she made no effort to visit the children once placed.

Annie Macpherson, her contemporary, a far different character with a record of devoted work among slum children, kept faultless accounts and was conscientious about visiting the young emigrants. Dr Barnardo, the biggest of the big battalions which followed, prided itself on the efficiency

of its arrangements. The Doctor himself laid down that continued supervision must be exercised over the children placed in Canadian homesteads; first by systematic visitation; second by regular correspondence. "Emigration in the case of young children, without continuous supervision is in our opinion presumptuous folly and simply courts disaster", he wrote.

Between intention and reality a gulf yawned. None of the agencies seemed to have any understanding of the terror and loneliness likely to be suffered by a child uprooted from its familiar surroundings and dumped on an isolated farm. The distances involved made regular or frequent visiting of the children virtually impossible. In any case, how accurately was the visitor, who was probably not a skilled social worker, likely to assess the situation? If tragedies like the death of a Barnardo boy immigrant from neglect and ill treatment were, mercifully, exceptional, many of the young apprentices knew hardship. By definition the farmers who took them did so because they needed labour and could not afford a hired man. In the words of one of them: "A child costs no more to keep than a chicken", and whether in the fields or in the kitchen the children had to earn their corn.

To set against that, there were undoubted successes, children who found loving adoptive homes, others who made decent careers in or out of farming. And, as some of the agencies declared, the alternatives were worse. Shaftesbury had spoken of more than 30,000 "naked, filthy, roaming, lawless and deserted children in London alone". Annie Macpherson thought everyone should be "deeply thankful that in parts of the East End four out of every five infants die before they reach their fifth year, because the other side of the picture among the living ones is so black, so awful, so crushing in its dreadful realities." Barnardo, many of whose children were not orphans, and who admitted to practising "philanthropic abduction" to separate some of them from parents whom he considered undesirable, felt that "to behold young men and women crowded together in pestilential workhouses without the least provision for decency" was "almost enough to fill the bravest reformer with despair".

To a later generation an equally horrifying factor in the situation is that so many good and brave reformers should have accepted the conditions as given and turned their energies into rescue work rather than attacking root causes. Would a Blake instead of a Barnardo have rather preached revolution, and a fig for the Empire?

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A mediator of meanings

By Anthony Giddens

PAUL RICOEUR:

Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences
Edited and translated with an introduction by John B. Thompson
314pp. Cambridge University Press/
Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme. £20 (paperback, £6.95).

Paul Ricoeur is something of a phenomenon among modern philosophers. Schooled in phenomenology, he has remained true to views that have largely gone out of fashion in France, following the ascendancy of structuralism and "post-structuralist" philosophies in that country. But he has certainly not been content dogmatically to defend an established position. On the contrary, he has modified and elaborated his views over the course of an extraordinarily productive career. Rather than succumb to fashion, he has attempted to confront other philosophical standpoints in such a way as to absorb their positive contributions into his own work. At a time when Anglo-Saxon philosophy at last seems to be emerging from its self-imposed isolation from Continental thought, Ricoeur's writings have much to commend them to the English-speaking reader. His work is concerned with traditions of philosophy only poorly known in Britain and the United States — phenomenology, structuralism and hermeneutics. But, unlike many of his counterparts in France or in Germany, his style is accessible and incisive. Moreover, he is well-versed in analytical philosophy, and particularly in his more recent writings he makes frequent reference to the ideas of British and American authors.

Some of the major themes in Ricoeur's writings, concerned with language, the interpretation of meaning, and the nature of action, overlap directly with the concerns of many analytical philosophers. But Ricoeur's approach to these matters derives from a very different philosophical background, indebted to German as well as to French thought. During the Second World War, he was a prisoner in Germany, but the experience was not for him wholly unhappy one. He was allowed by his captors to read German philosophical texts, some of which made a lasting impression upon him — in particular, the works of Husserl, Heidegger and Jaspers. Soon after his return to France, he established himself as a foremost authority on phenomenology, translating the first volume of Husserl's *Ideen* into English among other things a substantial study of Jaspers.

Ricoeur's conception of phenomenology was quite different from that popularized by Sartre as "existentialism". Thus he maintained his distance from the first wave of philosophy in which French high culture became immersed in the immediate post-war period, as he was to do in the face of subsequent trends. When others relinquished Husserl and Heidegger in favour of Lévi-Strauss, Saussure and Freud, Ricoeur did not follow them. But he did produce major works dealing with these latter writers: *De l'interprétation: Essai sur Freud* (1965) and *Le Conflit des interprétations* (1969). In these books he showed himself to be one of the most perceptive critics of structuralism; each contains ideas of enduring importance. Each also attests to the increasing influence of hermeneutics upon Ricoeur's thinking, an interest which has continued to deepen in his current writings.

The essays which John Thompson has assembled under the title *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* are all taken from Ricoeur's recent work. The book is beautifully produced, the essays have been chosen with care, and the volume has the benefit of an extensive introduction by its editor. It offers a comprehensive and integrated perspective of Ricoeur's ideas. In his superb introductory discussion, Thompson shows how Ricoeur has elaborated a synthesis between phenomenology and hermeneutics of a highly original

kind. His early works were preoccupied with developing a philosophy of the will, and with relating this to human fallibility. Thompson's analysis indicates how Ricoeur managed to break free from the confines of subjectivism to which phenomenology seemed doomed. Early on in his career, he came to the view that an account of human agency, its origins and its limits, cannot be "derived" from intentional structures, as Husserl had argued. Phenomenology should rather be seen as the end-result of philosophy, not its beginning. The human self is not a given, unitary form, but a series of mediations between the voluntary and the involuntary.

Such an emphasis allowed Ricoeur to confront the structuralist theme of the "de-centring of the subject" in a sympathetic manner. Ricoeur accepts that philosophy can no longer proceed as though the human mind or consciousness is transparent to the self. The self must be approached through a "detour" by way of the what we call as human beings. Structuralist and post-structuralist philosophies, however, are only equipped to guide us through part of this detour, because they lack a theory of symbolic interpretation such as only hermeneutics can provide. This basic standpoint, as elaborated in the course of his writings, has prompted Ricoeur to develop original analyses of a wide variety of philosophical problems. I can only mention a few of those discussed in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*; but I hope these will make clear the interest which his work holds for different areas of philosophy, social theory, and literary criticism.

Ricoeur's concern with Freud, and particularly with the epistemological status of psychoanalytic theory, is echoed in several of the essays in the book, and is the direct subject-matter of one of them. Whatever Freud himself might have believed, psychoanalysis cannot be regarded as a natural science of human conduct. It is essentially a hermeneutic endeavour, dealing with the detours of interpretation whereby the meanings of unconscious symbols are disclosed. But Ricoeur is critical of Lacan's attempt, as he sees it, to situate psychoanalysis wholly within language. The "semantics of desire" must be related to the "energetic" dimension of repression; to the hidden springs of action which are the very source of the barriers that separate the non-sense of the unconscious from the modalities of language. The claims of Freud, Ricoeur tries to show, are not refractory to "proof". However, the question of what is to count as proof in psychoanalysis must combine a range of criteria divergent from those ordinarily applied in natural science.

Ricoeur's philosophy of language has been in some part forged out of his critical encounter with structuralism. He has a number of objections to structuralist thought, as represented in particular by Lévi-Strauss, but also by Saussure's linguistics. Structuralism presumes, but does not develop, a hermeneutics that would explicate the "conflict of interpretations" always involved in the production of meaning. It thus cannot provide the basis for an overall form of philosophy, however useful some of its suppositions may be for the study of specific linguistic forms, such as

myths or texts. But structuralism also suppresses two phenomena which, Ricoeur argues forcibly, are essential to language: the intention of language-users to say something; and the intention to say something about something.

Rather than opposing, as Saussure does, *langue* (the system of language) and *parole* (particular words or forms of speech), Ricoeur distinguishes between the system of language and discourse. There is a discontinuity between the semiotics of language as a system, and the articulation of sentences in modes of discourse. The semantics of discourse cannot be directly inferred from the semiotics of sign structures. Discourse is an intrinsically creative phenomenon, the intersection of two senses of meaning: what speakers mean to say, and the meaning, or meanings, of what they say. Here Ricoeur makes use of speech-act theory, as developed by Austin, Strawson and Searle. The context of language-use is an integral feature of these two aspects of meaning. Hence, semantics can never be reduced to semiotics; the former is actually the foundation of the latter. The polysemic character of words is an irreducible characteristic of discourse.

Polysemy provides what Ricoeur calls a "surplus of meaning" that is the origin of metaphor, about which he has a lot to say. Metaphor has often been regarded as a rhetorical device, marginal to language as a whole, in which a figurative word is substituted for a literal one. But this view, according to Ricoeur, both misunderstands the nature of metaphor and greatly underestimates its significance for language. Metaphor does not operate at the level of the word or sign, but at the level of discourse. Metaphor is a syntactically deviant usage which establishes a novel connection within the terms of a discourse. Seen in the unfolding of discourse, metaphor is the very process whereby new meanings are created. An interesting part of Ricoeur's thesis is the idea that metaphor is not a figurative departure from a baseline of linguistic reference. Metaphor actually transforms the referential dimension of language, building new modes of representing or describing reality.

As all this might indicate, Ricoeur's approach to the theory of the text differs substantially from those associated with structuralism or post-structuralism. A text is not an expression of discourse in general, but a specific work of discourse, produced as a result of labour that shapes discourse into a particular configuration. "The work", Ricoeur says, "is submitted to a form of codification which is applied to the composition itself, and which transforms discourse into a story, a poem, an essay, etc. . . . Composition, belonging to a genre and individual style, characterises discourse as a work. The very word 'work' reveals the nature of these new categories: they are categories of production and of labour." Of course, a text is not only a work, it is a written work, and this gives texts an autonomy which speech lacks because of its transient character. A text is not merely the realization of spoken discourse. "It becomes, in Ricoeur's term, "distanced" from the conditions of its production in ways which spoken discourse cannot be. The meaning of

what an author writes in a text escapes the bounds of what he or she meant to convey, in the original circumstances in which it was fashioned. Whereas spoken discourse is contextually bound to a particular time and place, a text is available to an indefinite audience across time and space. Moreover, in contrast to the referential components of speech, the text opens up referential properties of a new kind. Texts disclose possible worlds, into which readers can enter. Texts, Ricoeur claims, "free reference from the limits of ostensive reference".

The interpretation of texts, Ricoeur points out, has always been the primary domain of hermeneutics. As he proposes in one of the key essays in the book ("The model of the text: meaningful action considered as a text"), the text can be used to demonstrate how hermeneutics can contribute to the explanation of human conduct in general. Human action may be regarded as a text which can be interpreted in terms of the forms of distanciation it expresses. Such a standpoint, Ricoeur suggests, may help us resolve certain problems of *Verstehen* — "understanding" — raised by Dilthey and Max Weber among many others. Meaningful action can be studied only in so far as it becomes objectified in a way rather similar to the autonomy of the text. Actions have consequences, and make up patterns which exceed the intentions of those who initiate them. As sedimented in time, human deeds become the "institutions" whose character is detached from the actors' intentions. Human action is an "open work" addressed, as Hegel says, to history. *Verstehen* is indeed fundamental to the human sciences, but the model of the text shows that it is not founded upon an "empathic" grasp of the subjectivity of actors. As in the case of texts, understanding the social world created through human action is substantially separate from — and a precondition of — grasping the mental processes of individual actors.

Ricoeur's conception of hermeneutics differs substantially from that of H.-G. Gadamer, his famous contemporary in Germany. Both are strongly influenced by Heidegger, but Ricoeur rejects Gadamer's dissolution of truth from method; methodological reflection, for Ricoeur, is central to the "conflict of interpretations" which is the essence of hermeneutics. But if he disagrees with Gadamer, Ricoeur also disagrees with one of the latter's most "famous" critics, Jürgen Habermas. The controversy between Gadamer and Habermas over the nature and scope of hermeneutics has been the subject of commentary by a variety of writers, but Ricoeur's discussion of the debate, in his essay "Hermeneutics and the critique of ideology", is one of the most cogent that anyone can make. The core of the debate concerns the question whether or not hermeneutics can cope with the problem of ideology. Ricoeur argues persuasively that the opposition of hermeneutics and critical theory is a mistaken one. Hermeneutics can itself be, and should be, critical. Habermas argues that ideology is distorted communication, and that the aim of critical theory is to emancipate human social life from such distortion. But surely, Ricoeur asks, this coincides with the objective of hermeneutics: the expansion of communication through the exploration of divergent interpretations of meaning. "It is the task of philosophical hermeneutics," he concludes, "to eliminate reflection, which would oppose the interest in the interpretation of cultural heritage received from the past and the interest in the futuristic projections of a liberated humanity. The moment these two interests become radically separate, then hermeneutics and critique will themselves be no more than 'ideologies'!"

Critical — hermeneutics — an appropriate term, perhaps, with which to sum up Ricoeur's own philosophical position. I do not think that anyone would fail to find illumination and challenge in reading him.

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Bill Manhire

Weaving, deceiving and indecision

By Lorna Sage

MARY R. LEFKOWITZ:
Heroines and Hysterics
 90pp. Duckworth. £8.95.
 0 7156 1518 1

Classical studies since seemed to imply a vaguely androgynous aspiration but over the last ten years or so they have become a focus for much more radical speculations about sexual roles and sexual difference - neatly reflecting as they always did, perhaps precisely because they were supposed not to, current preoccupations. Semonides of Amorgos, poet-philosopher of the seventh century BC, for instance, can seldom have been so oft-quoted:

From the beginning the god made the mind of woman
 A thing apart. One he made from the long-haired sow;
 While she wallows in the mud and rolls about on the ground,
 Everything at home lies in a mess.
 Another doesn't take baths but sits about
 In the shit in dirty clothes and gets fatter and fatter.
 The god made another one from the evil lox.

Semonides was a prize example in Sarah Pomeroy's 1975 *Goddesses, Whores, and Slaves*, a bitterly enthusiastic exercise in literary archaeology, laying bare the foundations of misogyny. The maddest myths about the creation of women acquire a new piquancy these days.

Of the men who came into the world, those who were cowards or led unrighteous lives may with reason be supposed to have changed into the nature of women in the second generation. And this was the reason why at that time the gods created in us the desire of sexual intercourse.

Well, obviously. This is Plato's *Timaeus*, and one can see why scholars interested in women's "nature" have found it in a way heartening, partly because it so clearly suggests, as Noel Coward used to put it, that things might have been organized better. The rest of the passage is just as interesting. The penis is like a troublesome animal, a domestic parasite:

and the same is the case with the so-called womb or matrix of women; the animal within them is desirous of procreating children, and when remaining fruitful long becomes discontented and angry, and wandering in every direction through the body, closes up the passages of the breath, and drives them to extremity.

Eventually, their parasitic animals bring man and woman together. Perhaps. The bringing together involves a disputed reading, a textual crux, as well it might.

As this kind of material undergoes a new translation, the extraordinary difficulty of finding out what Greek women were, or felt themselves to be, becomes increasingly pressing. The wandering womb is the subject of one of the most interesting pieces in Mary Lefkowitz's *Heroines and Hysterics*, and, as she shows, the doctors were no more troubled by actual anatomy than Plato. Women, in more senses than one, were a vagrant, suffering space in the culture, only safe of "well" when child-bearing. "Treatment of the disorder involves giving the womb what it wants to receive seed and to produce offspring. Doctors believed, Ms Lefkowitz suggests, more like priests than anything else, explaining the nature of the disorder in forces beyond man's control, and certainly beyond woman's. Woman's biology, like so much else about her, is obscure and fugitive - a matter of obsessions and uncertainties. The wandering womb, in short, is a fitting emblem for classical women's most unclassical status, and *Heroines and Hysterics* mirrors its subject matter by stressing the (probably permanent) fragmentation and indirection of our knowledge about them.

In this, it's very different from Sarah Pomeroy's aggressive analysis of misogyny, and also from Sir Ken-

neth Dover's book, *Greek Homosexuality*, of four years ago. Dover was able to be robustly demystifying: homosexuality was elaborately tied in with all aspects of cultural life, and had complex rules and mores (for example, that "nice" boys didn't enjoy it - in many ways be produced an almost Victorian picture), and our ignorance was a matter of our own repressions. Even he, however, was defeated when it came to women - "That female homosexuality and the attitude of women to male homosexuality can both be discussed within one part of one chapter reflects the paucity of women writers and artists in the Greek world and the virtual silence of male writers and artists on these topics." The more we investigate, the less, it seems, there is to look at.



"Standing woman" and "Aphrodite binding sandal" from Morgantina Studies, Volume 1, The Terracottas by Malcolm Bell (22pp with 130 plates. Princeton University Press. £38.70. 0 691 03946 1).

Ms Lefkowitz would not put it quite so strongly. Not all her heroines are hysterics. None the less she insists, with her own brand of stoicism, that the visible women are experts in passive suffering:

the *Ilad* ends not with a description of debate or of battle, but with funeral lamentations of Hector's kinswomen. His wife Andromache... talks of the life she will lead as a slave, and suggests that her son will also be enslaved or even killed by the Achaeans; his mother, Hecuba, speaks of Achilles' brutality, and of the other sons that he killed; Helen tells of his kindness, when all others reproached her. So the epic ends with reflection on the fate of the victims, not of the victors of the famous war... the women who cannot take action for themselves have the last words.

These women on the sidelines stand somewhere between audience and actors, and - perhaps - between actors and the "forces beyond man's control" that the epics and the tragedies seek to encounter; precisely because they "endure the consequences of the action in the arena," they are best able to interpret its meaning, and, as survivors, to demonstrate its consequences. A woman's view of the action is essentially chronic. For Ms Lefkowitz, the tragic heroines who break the rules, like Antigone ("I am not a man," says Creon, "she is a man if she can have this power without suffering"), actually prove, the rule. The moments from tragedy that she peculiarly savours are those when women demonstrate their exclusion from the action, as in Euripides' *Andromache*: She has taken refuge at Thetis' shrine, along with her son, Neoptolemus. Neoptolemus' wife Hermione... wants to murder her. But because both she and Andromache are women, they must wait for their male relatives to arrive on the scene before anything can happen.

Women encounter the impossible (or the inevitable) at almost every step, and so, in a sense, arrive by a nasty short cut at the end of wisdom, without the heroic delusions of the real actors. Euripides seems so convinced of "traditional dangers" that in his work women's passive heroism sometimes becomes the model for men.

It will be seen that this is a double-edged argument. Ms Lefkowitz admires Penelope's virtues ("weaving, deceiving, indecision") and finds even in Sappho a predilection for "the special weapons of the oppressed, miracles and patience"; and her own strategies are similarly underhand. Active heroism (when was it anything else from the point of view of the chorus?) is dangerous, crassly public behaviour. On the sidelines, we at least know we live marginally, precariously, provisionally.



"Standing woman" and "Aphrodite binding sandal" from Morgantina Studies, Volume 1, The Terracottas by Malcolm Bell (22pp with 130 plates. Princeton University Press. £38.70. 0 691 03946 1).

If ancient women had written as much as men, our impression of what mattered in the world would be greatly altered: conversation might count more than physical appearance, punishment be more often internalized, and greater stress be placed on the effect of one's actions on others.

The separation of male and female cultures in the ancient world, on this view, starts to look less a matter of misogyny and exclusion than of a (still) unsolved mystery. The hysteria question, the wandering womb, for instance, takes Ms Lefkowitz, via some tactful "weaving", into the consideration of arguments about women's education towards the end of the last century. Intensive courses of study, it was feared, indeed shown by "research", would lead to menstrual disorders, an atrophy of the womb even; certainly an intense fear of childbearing, Greek, Hebrew and higher mathematics were especially suspect, and so were single-sex colleges, as having a more or less direct effect on women's pelvic economy. The learned doctors were anxious, like their ancient predecessors, to ensure that women wouldn't somehow lose touch with their dubious biology, their obscure link with the human race. Ms Lefkowitz, if I read her indirectly right, wants to suggest that in a way they were right to be anxious, and that bringing man and woman together, proving almost as tricky as Plato imagined.

She has, here, a special advantage, since she was herself educated and now teaches at Wellesley, one of the New England women's colleges established in the face of womb-panic, and one that was conservative enough to stay a women's college during the 1960s and early 1970s. Her piece on "Education for Women in a Man's World" meditates on the contrast between this "strange Utopia" and the effect of a semester spent teaching at the University of California at Berkeley, where "you can be whoever you want to be, as if in an intellectual communal death."

Perhaps the quotation says almost enough: Berkeley attracts women as women underground; "they keep hearing this message that says their biological make-up is a odds with their intellectual or professional role..." The great majority of their teachers are male ("since the 1930s the proportion of PhD's earned by women has decreased"), and academic mores, however heroic, make assumptions about women's roles that sound remarkably Greek.

In classics... married men write significantly more books and articles than unmarried men, or unmarried women, and married women, with a few exceptions, write the fewest of all.

The wry conclusion being that higher education has merely postponed marriage and children, for women; and that acquiring wives, or at least the support of communities of women, starts to look like the only (provisional) answer.

This is a thought which has increasingly occurred to feminists over the last decade. The notion of separate spheres, once a betrayal in its marginality, has taken on a new, and newly embittered, relevance. Ms Lefkowitz doesn't sound particularly bitter. It's true, but her continued insistence on the shadowy otherness of women's lives and meanings places her firmly in the tough-minded camp, as well as in an all-female campus. The book's two final essays - "On Becoming a Cow" and "On Becoming a Tree" - set out the ground rules, as it were. They are both about translation, and translation seen most radically as metamorphosis - a traumatic, infinitely problematic change of state. The "cow" is in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Unbound*, horribly defecated into a fly-bitten heifer by her union with Zeus. Her deformity is the result of the war that cannot be fought - a literally intestine battle; she is indeed hysterical, schizophrenic. Translators, Ms Lefkowitz argues, have nearly always diminished her paradox by turning the chorus's description of her sexual terror into a familiar idiom - "What will become of me?" Whereas I should read "What should I become?" or even, "Who should I become?" Only Gilbert Murray (perhaps, she suggests, because he was writing "during the years when women in England achieved... political equality") did his tragedy some justice with the words, "I know not how I should be changed." For the most part, our translations have decently veiled a translation into a female animal: "Union with Zeus has dire consequences... Marriage even to a mortal, with its usual consequence of pregnancy, inevitably involves physical transformation."

"On Becoming a Tree" looks, with a certain wryness, at the alternative scenario, in the form of the Tree Day ceremony at Wellesley, a bridal procession without a groom, at which students plant a tree to commemorate their life together, before graduating. (Again, like the college itself, this custom has survived long enough to acquire what one might call a post-feminist force). The ceremonial songs culled from the college archives have a sadly *fin de siècle* tone about them - love-lyrics to *Alma Mater*.

The message... is at best discouraging: that one must love one's beloved, but must leave her, even though the relationship is aesthetically satisfying, and engenders respect, and other years may bring us tears.

Other days be full of fears. But the songs offer no suggestions of how to deal with these inevitable difficulties to come. Which is rather Ms Lefkowitz's position, too. She wishes her readers, I think, to see in these pasty rhymes a distant echo of the female chorus in Greek tragedy, and to draw what strength they can from it, as it were, facing the worst. As Penelope discovered when Hades carried her off to the Underworld, marriage is death.

Visions and revisions

By Walter Laqueur

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One of the charms of history is that it is rewritten from time to time, but it is dangerous to overdo it. The French Revolution has been subjected to changing interpretations and many books have been written for and against Napoleon, as we know from Peter Ceyl. All this is perfectly legitimate, but if someone were to argue that Napoleon was the leading advocate and practitioner of pacifism in his time he would invite ridicule. It is one thing to admire Stalin, it is another to depict him as a great humanist whose sole aspiration was to cooperate with the West in a spirit of goodwill, peace and mutual benefit.

The inability to accept the permissible limits of rewriting history was the undoing of the Cold War revisionists, a school which had many sympathizers in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s. For a while this was the new orthodoxy; in Europe, however, it was always less influential among professional historians for the simple reason that the Soviet Union was not involved in the Vietnam war. It proponents argued that the aggressive West was mainly (if not entirely) to blame for the break-up of the wartime alliance and the Cold War, whereas Stalin stood for close political and economic collaboration with his allies. If he expanded a little the borders of the Soviet Union in various directions, this was done partly in a fit of absent-mindedness, partly because the Soviet Union suffered from deep-seated feelings of insecurity, and, above all, because he was provoked by the hostile actions of the Western warmongers. In short, according to this school of thought, Stalin was not an actor but merely a reactor.

Cold War revisionism focused only on one side in the post-war conflict, namely on America. There was no interest in re-examining Soviet foreign policy. The result was entertaining, for it resembled a boxing-match in which the spectators see only one of the fighters: they watch him attacking, retreating, punching, counter-punching, fainting; but since the other contestant is never visible the whole exercise appears ludicrous. Furthermore, even with regard to United States and British policy, the picture was sadly deficient, for a great deal of essential source material has been accessible only since about 1975. But by that year all the major revisionist studies had already been written. Thus, in retrospect, a decade of Cold War revisionist historiography had much the same impact on serious scholarship as two other revisionist doctrines - the Hitler-stumbled-into-the-war school and the Pearl Harbor-as-Roosevelt's-fault school - which is to say, precisely nothing: it is one thing to argue that the Western allies before 1939, and Roosevelt in 1940-41, made mistakes, or that the Western powers occasionally misjudged the Soviet Union in 1945-48. But in all three cases the conflict would have been inevitable even if the West had acted with much greater wisdom and committed not a single error.

John Lewis Gaddis, in his monumental study of Pearl Harbor, *At Dawn We Slept*, wrote apropos of the revisionist arguments that on one who had examined the great mass of historical evidence could doubt that the United States wanted to maintain peace with Japan for as long as possible. The same is true, grosso modo, with regard to France and Britain up to and including 1938. It also applies to United States and British foreign policy in 1945 and after. Indeed, if the Western powers had been less hesitant in their advance towards Berlin and Prague in the spring of 1945, or if they had not demobilized in record time once the war ended, some of the major complications of the post-war period might never have arisen.

For a number of years these controversial facts were all but lost in a fog of obfuscation. Of late this has changed. V. Mastny's *Russia's Road to the Cold War* (1979) helped to clear up some of the confusion; Victor Rothwell's study, as well as Roy Douglas's book published last year, should finish the job. It is the great merit of Rothwell's book that it combines massive research into the Foreign Office records with lucid analysis. There are long and usually very interesting excerpts from minutes, not only by the wartime and post-war leaders but also by their middle-level officials at the time, men such as Frank Roberts, Christopher Watson, Oliver Harvey, Pierson Dixon, Orme Sargent and William Strang. Their assessments and also their misjudgments provide a fascinating running commentary on West-East relations. There were, of course, differences of opinion between them but this was true more of the period prior to 1945 than thereafter. Up to late 1944 it was widely believed that the Soviet Union wanted security, that she suffered from a "traditional inferiority complex" and that she should be treated with "infinite patience". As Geoffrey Wilson argued, reserve and suspicion were so ingrained in the Russian character as to be excusable. True, some sceptics thought that the Soviet Union harboured more far-reaching ambitions, and that she would penetrate deep into Europe. But even these worst case analysts talked only about the "encirclement of Poland" and the "closest possible collaboration with Czechoslovakia". Doubts had become more widespread by the time the war ended, and after 1946 they were fairly general. As Austin Haigh noted: "if the British public continues to harbour the illusion that we have only to get to know the Russians better to find that they are the same sort of fellows we are, then the British public is in for some painful shocks."

But Eden, and after him Bevin, continued to exercise great patience, denouncing any loose talk about "anti-Soviet groupings". Churchill and Eden were increasingly impatient with the Poles dreaming their dreams of independence. Bevin continued to believe for a long time after the war that the Russians could and should be appeased. Attlee, as it appears from the records, was far more sceptical in this respect.

By late 1945 disillusionment with the Russians was widespread among American diplomats in Eastern Europe, but this was by no means true of the State Department, which tried very hard to "mediate" between the Soviet Union and Britain. According to a note written at the time by Frank Roberts, some American diplomats believed that the Soviet leadership was divided into two groups over the issue of relations with the West - "hawks" and "doves" as we would say now - and that it would pay to make unilateral moves to loosen the ties between the Kremlin. (Forty years later the theory still has some advocates in Washington.) When George Kennan returned from the United States to Moscow in October 1945 he told a British colleague (according to British sources) that he had found a sharp distinction at home between, on the one hand, officials and academics, and on the other, well-to-do women who dabbled in politics and who nursed a guilty conscience about America's treatment of the Soviet Union over the years. Lord

Hankey commented, "I wish the failure to recognize the need for patient finesse was confined to well-to-do American women who dabbled in politics. Unfortunately this is not the case. But I think that under Molotov's able and truly remarkable tuition we are all learning a thing or two this year." Hankey overrated Molotov's ability as a teacher, or perhaps some of the pupils were slower in the uptake than he expected. Even in early 1947 Bevin was willing to make one-sided concessions to the Russians in order to induce them to take part in the Marshall Plan; in a speech to the Labour Party in 1947 there was not a word of criticism of the Soviet Union. By then virtually all his advisers had reached the conclusion that, as Brimelow put it, "our concessions would be accepted without gratitude and used against us".

Victor Rothwell's important study breaks fresh ground, whereas Kenneth Thompson tries to accommodate conflicting viewpoints and to provide a new synthesis. His work is an almost Hegelian quality: the "orthodox" historians constituted the thesis, and now the time has come for a detached, objective overview, the synthesis. Revisionist historians, he writes, have become a "significant, articulate and influential scholarly group" providing a healthy corrective to orthodox historiography. True, they have no monopoly of historical truth, and in the last resort they are guilty of error similar to those committed by the orthodox historians, however much they inveigh against each other. "Each group portrays a major political system as being driven by a deterministic force beyond its control. Each identifies an expansionist dynamic at work which makes conflict inevitable. Each views one set of decision makers as driven by an ideology which blinds them to responsible political judgment." This is a very decent, gentlemanly approach, and indeed Thompson was elsewhere of legitimate differences of opinion between men of good will. He quotes Robert Jervis's study of attitudes and misperceptions in international politics. Perhaps it was all a giant misunderstanding, a matter of mutual fears and mutual insecurity, "part of the basic security power dilemma as each side sees in the other not only a potential menace but because of misperception an active and diabolical enemy".

It is a noble effort but, alas, it cannot possibly come off. There are, of course, misperceptions on international affairs but they are much more infrequent than the genuine conflicts. Hitler's decision to dominate Europe did not stem from cognitive failure, nor do the conflicts between the Soviet Union and China, between the Arabs and Israel, between India and Pakistan, and so on. Even in Czechoslovakia in 1968, in Afghanistan and, more recently, in Poland were not rooted in misperceptions. Even the outbreak of the First World War, the favourite example of the "perceptualists", had only to a limited degree to do with perceptions of hostility and threat. Thompson, who lived through the post-war period, pauses every now and then and, in the middle of paying respect to the revisionists, realizes that he is dealing with mythology not reality. From his own experience he knows that the revisionists did not want security; they were taken in the United States as the result of pressure by the giant business and banking concerns. Stalin was not really a "frank, sincere and well intentioned" politician. Charming the course of the Cold War in Europe, he recalls that the initiative did not come from Washington and that when Winston Churchill made his "Iron Curtain" speech at Fulton he was bitterly attacked as a warmonger, even though he merely said that the Russians did not want war but only the fruits of war, and that an equilibrium of strength was needed in Europe. And so Thompson concludes that, "knowing what

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**American Studies
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we know today, we cannot but view with surprise the sharp reaction to Churchill's historic speech".

In the end, nothing much remains of the "synthesis". Thompson lived through the 1930s and 1940s, and should thus have recalled that people may be "significant, articulate, and influential" and yet totally wrong. Perhaps he should have refreshed his memory by using contemporary Soviet and East European sources, and above all the American intelligence reports which have been accessible now for the past few years. Had he done so, a different picture would have emerged: far from stocking up the Cold War, Central Intelligence and State Department Intelligence took an almost consistently benign view of Soviet intentions. In September 1947, the CIA, in the first issue of its top-secret "Review of the World Situation", held that the Soviet Union was unlikely to resort to open military aggression as circumstances then stood. In February 1948 it was reported that the European Communist parties (with Soviet approval) were retreating to electoral processes and that there was "reviving its policy and seeking an accommodation with the West". It was believed that the Soviet Union was abandoning violent action in favour of parliamentary practices because it wanted to bolster the Communist vote in the forthcoming Czechoslovak elections. It should have been clear that the Communists had no such intention, following their negative experiences in Hungary. Five days after the publication of the CIA assessment, with the forced resignation of the neo-Communist ministers in Prague, the coup took place which was to prove a turning point in post-war European history.

American Intelligence assessment of the Berlin blockade, too, was anything but alarmist; on the contrary, once the blockade had ended in May 1949 there were visions of détente. The Soviet Union, it was believed, had two basic alternatives: to enter negotiations in an attempt to delay and confuse Western policy; or to attempt to reach an agreement that would remove Germany as a bone of contention and to arrive at a détente. The CIA analysts saw the second choice as the more likely; unfortunately Stalin did not, and thus a year later the United States was again taken by surprise, this time in Korea. (It should be noted that when the Korean war broke out the CIA, that Cold War monster par excellence, counted all in all 302 staff members and its budget amounted to about four million dollars.) In short, far from engaging in the relentless pursuit of the Cold War, America, as so often in its history, was altogether unprepared.

It is true that after 1950 there was a manic-depressive trend in United States foreign policy. Having misjudged Stalin's intentions for so long, policy-makers tended to over-react. With the outbreak of the Korean war the estimates suddenly changed. From now on a "grey danger of war" was seen which would last for at least four years and which would be at its most serious two years thence. Scenarios referred to simultaneous Soviet attacks all over the globe. These figures and scenarios have become something of a joke in retrospect. But all this does not change the essential fact, that Washington was very slow to understand events in Europe. As Robert Solomon, at that time a young American diplomat in Budapest, wrote: "For months we were regarded by the Russians as the 'Department of Rusephobes'. It is not uncommon, and our reports were dismissed as 'Rusephobes'. His well-meant essay comes in any case several years too late. Some revisionists have since admitted that their views were wrong, or at the very least one-sided, some have disappeared from this field of study, and the trend as a whole is no longer fashionably except as an article of faith among some political fringe groups.

John Lewis Gaddis has written about the Cold War before; he now provides an authoritative survey of



On the eve of Pearl Harbor: Kichiseburo Nomura, Japanese Ambassador to the United States (left), with Secretary of State Cordell Hull (center) and Saburo Kuroki, Japan's special envoy for a "final attempt at peace", arriving at the White House on November 17, 1941. From the book referred to on the previous page, Gordon W. Prange's *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* (873pp, Michael Joseph, £14.95, 0 7181 20906) which will be reviewed in a future issue of the TLS.

how America's post-war strategy of containment developed from George Kennan's famous "long telegram" and NSC-68, via Eisenhower's "New Look" and the Kennedy-Johnson "flexible response", to the Nixon-Kissinger détente and beyond. It is an intelligent, sensible study and the author makes good use of presidential and other government papers that have been declassified in recent years. Several basic patterns emerge: that despite his public rhetoric, Dulles was a more subtle and skilful diplomat than he is usually given credit for; that Eisenhower, with all his sterling qualities, was not the political genius depicted by latter-day revisionists; and, above all, that something was basically amiss with the strategy of containment from the beginning, in that it emphasized military affairs, to the detriment of political and economic aspects. In effect, containment never really became a proper strategy but always remained a general assessment of the situation. Even the stress on military measures was largely rhetorical; allocations for defence went down from 21 per cent of the GNP in 1946 to 4.6 per cent in 1950 - hardly "proof" that official Washington was serious about the Soviet threat and the "building of situations of strength".

The same pattern, by and large, prevailed in later years. The basic purpose of a strategy is to differentiate between vital and peripheral interests. For, as Dean Acheson put it, "We cannot scatter our shots equally over the world. We just have not enough shots to do that." Yet, until the 1970s no serious attempt was made to define United States interests in the world and to establish a set of priorities, and even that was done in a rather vague way. "Metrical containment" (to use Gaddis's term), ie, resistance to aggression all over the globe, led to Korea and Vietnam, to frustration, exhaustion, and worse. Asymmetrical containment, ie, selective containment or containment minus, on the other hand, provided no guarantees, that peripheral challenges to the balance of power might not become major ones. There is no easy way out of this dilemma; for the power of the United States is not unlimited, and means and ends have to be adjusted.

Mr Gaddis expresses surprise about the primary that has been accorded to domestic economic considerations in shaping strategies of containment "to the exclusion of other considerations" (author's italics). This is only too true, for United States foreign policy has been dictated to a large extent by parochial concerns. This has been its fundamental weakness all along and it is as true today as it was in the late 1940s. How, then, are we to explain that containment has been, after all, a "surprisingly successful strategy"? (This statement seems to be more correct with regard to Europe than the rest of the world.) The answer surely is that the Soviet Union has also had to face major difficulties, though of a totally different kind, that the United States was not alone in the world but had allies, and that the decades since the end of the Second World War have been a period of unprecedented economic progress for the Western world. There seem to be rougher seas ahead for both sides in the years to come, and it remains to be seen which will be better equipped to cope with coming storms.

Total ellipse

By Colin Greenland

BRIAN ALDISS

Helliconia Spring

361pp. Cape, £6.95.

0 224 01843 4

"To comprehend fully what I tell you", cries Vry, who has put knowledge before comfort and educated herself above the standard of her tribe, "you must first understand and then grasp the understanding with your imagination, so that the facts live." Vry's words describe exactly what Brian Aldiss's latest novel is about and how it came to be written. The fact that Vry's lecture is supposed to be pacifying a bloodthirsty mob demonstrates that understanding does get out of hand now and then, even when the imagination has an iron grip.

Helliconia Spring is the first yield of four years' work which will eventually produce a trilogy of the seasons on Aldiss's imaginary world. Originally the project included an encyclopedia, like Borges's *Tlön*, with entries by experts on every aspect of Helliconia from astronomy to zoology; but the usual vagaries of publishing intervened, leaving Aldiss to do the whole job himself in fiction, with the scientists as consultants. We can be glad it turned out in the way it did. As the subject of an encyclopedia, however weighty, Helliconia would have seemed a magnificent pastime, self-enclosed, self-referential, an irresistible snare for those who have begun to tire of "Dungeons and Dragons" or elementary Elvish. As a novel, its life brims over into our own.

There is one major difference, though, between Helliconia and our own planet: its solar system has been captured by a second, far larger star, around which it travels in an extremely long ellipse. The Great Year of Helliconia lasts 2,592 Earth years: time enough for empires to come and go, and to forget how the climate has altered. As Helliconia swings away from the white super-

giant Freyr, the glaciers mobilize again and the high civilization of summer is obliterated by ice and snow. Aldiss uses a device customary in science-fictional history: after catastrophic change, the science of the ancestors supplies the myths and legends of their descendants. The winter races retain only a dim conviction that the Ancients used to be able to work stone and metal and fly through the air; but that was before the Fall. The cycles of suns, earth and stars are recorded as battles and alliances of gods. "These legends carried reality within them, as a flower bulb carries the flower within its flesh. So humans knew without knowing that they knew." Shapes in the Imagination endure, but understanding has gone.

Knowledge and power preside over the book like another dubious binary star. The novel opens amid chaos and night, in the depths of winter, when starving hunters trail migrating herds. The boy Yuli has the wit to escape when his father is captured by phagors, an enigmatic and bestial people (designed, Aldiss says, in homage to Michael Ayton's miserable, mutevolent minotaurs). Yuli takes refuge in Pannoval, a cave-city under mountain, where all knowledge and power are vested in the priesthood. Growing up, Yuli enters holy orders, seeking an answer to the mystery of existence, but renounces his vows and runs away when he finds that the priests hold knowledge subordinate to faith, prohibiting thought and discovery. Yuli and his companions found the enlightened community of Embruddock, about which the rest of this volume circles, observing its growth, its changes, and especially the adventures of its people. As a Lord of Embruddock lies dying, another priest asks Yuli's great-grandson, "Which do you want more, power or knowledge?" The boy stares at the floor. "Both, sir... or whichever comes easier."

Aoz Roon the hunter assumes the succession, but his reign is a running battle with Shay Tal, the woman he loves, who insists on staying apart from him to pursue her craft of sor-

cery as it moves across the threshold into science. The drama of female emancipation begins early in this society: Shay Tal opens an academy for women dedicated to reviving knowledge through archaeology and empiricism. Aoz Roon is opposed to the academy. He sees temporal power as a matter of taming horses, securing territory, setting up lines of control and communication. Vry, Shay Tal's successor, studies to predict the eclipses which terrify the tribe. Raynil Layan, who relents money, tells Vry he loves her for her mind as well as her body: "I believe that knowledge can be wedded to power to reinforce it." Aldiss depicts this ominous, familiar wedding of commerce and science in one brilliant scene where Vry accepts Raynil's line of seduction by using his new coins to demonstrate how Helliconia nibbles its suns.

Helliconia Spring is epic science fiction, in the traditional sense of a narrative of vast historical scope which focuses on the trials and achievements of individuals. Embruddock passes through the archetypal phases - a heroic age, a pastoral interlude, the establishment of agriculture, technology, and trade. Classical and Biblical precedents abound, though this is less the story of a chosen race than the epic of an entire ecology, from volcano to virus, growing ever more active and interactive as the environment warms up. In the icy fogs of the opening pages, Helliconia is "not so much a world as a place awaiting formal creation", which Aldiss works hard to provide. His structural sense, the grasp of imagination on understanding, does slip sometimes, and this results in a plot which is overdependent on coincidence and overburdened with slabs of undigested science. On the whole, however, Aldiss manages splendidly the role of SF's latest Pancretor - a role most recently played by Robert Silverberg and before him Frank Herbert. What qualifies Aldiss for the job is not only his varied literary experience, but also his intelligence, inventiveness, and inveterate fondness for human beings however benighted.

Life at the bottom

By David Profumo

ANDRÉ JUTE

Sinkhole

298pp. Secker and Warburg, £7.50.

0 436 22982 X

Readers of the future who borrow this book from one of those libraries which divest volumes of their dust-jackets on arrival will be deprived of a nicely ironical image of the world that *Sinkhole* depicts: a photograph of a car that has tumbled into a pit caused by subsidence in an American town. As both the subtitle, "A tragedy of the machine age", and the author's prefatory observations unambiguously insist, this is the position the West can expect to find itself in as a consequence of its excessive dependence on the possession of oil.

The novel describes what happens when an area measuring forty blocks in an American city one day disappears - a thousand feet underground, trapping a handful of survivors among the rubble and numerous corpses in its crater. It transpires that the government has over the years been acquiring clandestine supplies of oil from abroad and pumping them into the country's own exhausted fields, creating strategic reserves. However, the oil's natural qualities have caused it to seep away from these subterranean reservoirs, and it has eaten its way underground: the heart of the city, thereby causing the disaster.

The jacket photograph is aptly chosen; it is a well-emphasized opinion of Jute that the demands of the internal combustion engine are

dictating the way humans treat their environment, and the disaster shapes a warning that such an obsession could result in civilization being quite literally undermined by it. There is a further connection with the plot: the pictured car is a Porsche, and Quirk, the first character we meet, is a millionaire renowned for his mountaineering exploits, who has made his fortune from dealing in Porsche-Audi vehicles. There is therefore particular justice in the fact that he should be one of the enterprising heroes who subsequently circumvent the urban authorities and mount a daring rescue operation.

Such a fantastic drama inevitably has affinities with disaster-movies; in this case, an up-ended version of *The Towering Inferno*. The filmic dimension is introduced when we encounter in rapid succession a number of characters who are converging on the centre of the city with various aims, as if in a set of title-sequences that act as prologue to the crisis. For the addition of television films there will be a vague familiarity about some of Jute's cast: a self-important senator, a brilliant young fireman, a rich and attractive surgeon and his beautiful blonde nurse. Such representative types from American sagas seem impossibly alien to anyone who lives in Britain, but that is the source of their fascination, as in those films in which Dr Smith, the awaited specialist, in an obscure branch of medicine, turns out to be a glamorous blonde. Jute's band of survivors is a judicious mixture of such individuals and more ordinary specimens, and the collision between them accounts for the most accessible element of the story - its study of human behaviour.

While hysteria and hamfistedness dictate the behaviour of those left up-

on the surface, the world at the bottom of the crater is a microcosm of society at large. As in *Lord of the Flies*, some revert to primitivism - this is the case with The Sueds, a group of religious fundamentalists led by a rapist devotee from Wilkes-Barre, who grow through the rubble in search of sacrifices; more laudable qualities emerge in others. With its whirling darkness, screaming, and blinding wind, the crater becomes an inferno which puts all the survivors to the test. Jute pays uncompromising attention to Bosch-like details of physical nastiness, and draws on images from other studies in confinement and claustrophobia: a ruined department store is rifled for equipment like Crusoe's wreck; the bizarre atmospheric conditions and desolate urban geography recall science-fiction novels about survivors of atomic holocausts.

However, implausible the basic premise of the plot might appear, Jute has clearly conducted a great deal of research into everything he describes, much of it very technical. Occasionally this deteriorates into exhibitionism of a rather distracting kind, but in the main it has the effect of investing the novel with an air of prophecy. This prophetic aspect suffers, though, from authorial insistence that certain things are perennially and dangerously true about human behaviour; and the novel as a whole labours its points. But its moral and ecological concerns are important ones, and Jute is evidently a man of very forceful opinions; in the note about him on the jacket we learn, for example, that he abhors "joggling Professors of Eng. Lit. at provincial universities". If the disturbing predictions of *Sinkhole* should prove correct, that will be the way we shall all get around.

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Braidhead revisited

By Patricia Crag

JAN WEBSTER:
Duc South
320pp. Collins. £7.95.
0 00 221435 0

Like Andrea Newman's *Mackenzie, Duc South* deals with enterprising Scotsmen making good in London - in Fleet Street, to be precise, where big newspapers with names like the *Blade* and the *Courier* are awfully anxious to capture the market. Braidhead is a place not far from Glasgow where the typical home is a greystone tenement.

In one of these lives Hannah Callaway, with an insensitive mother who breaks into her daughter's revenue with an offer not potted head for tea when Hannah's mind is on higher things such as love, chastity, and the intentions of Hector Aitken, whom she has just seen onto a London-bound train. It is 1952, and Hector has left the *Braidhead Gazette* to try his luck in the South. He soon succumbs to the allure of London, where the streets are not dispiritingly full of poor children with holes in their knickers. He meets a BBC secretary called Monica who dresses in black with touches of emerald green. Such sophistication! Home-town Hannah, who reminds Hector of the Sunday School picnic, cannot hope to compete with this.

Hector is not the only star of the *Braidhead Gazette*. Hannah is an ambitious woman, a page reporter herself, the editor and sports writer. Ally Callie, has fixed his sights on the editorship of the famous London *Courier*. His plans also include marrying Hannah and turning her into the mother of his children, and a way to do this is opened when Hector's involvement with Monica becomes serious. The two couples are soon married and living in London. Hannah really loves Ally, though she quickly discovers that marriage is not a bed of roses (these are her very words), and she continues to savour what the author refers to as "the Hector-ness of Hector" whenever she meets him.

Seven years go by. Hannah gives birth to three children while Monica, worried about her infertility and gets very cross when her friends allude to it. Meanwhile, in what passes for the

real world, Harold Macmillan is repelling the Suez whirlwind, the Liberals are back on the political scene, and Ally Callie is being taken to task for allowing his admiration for Hugh Galskell, whom he sometimes calls Galskell, to distort the balance of his column. Hannah cannot tear herself away from the care of her children, even when several offers of jobs in Fleet Street come up ("... that exciting, turbulent world"), but finds herself becoming increasingly resentful when her literary ambitions are not taken seriously. "Can women be mothers and other things too...?" Hector Aitken wonders, pointing out that what he calls the "biggies" were all childless. The solitary example of Mrs Galskell is all, in 1959, the literary mother-in-law to sustain her.

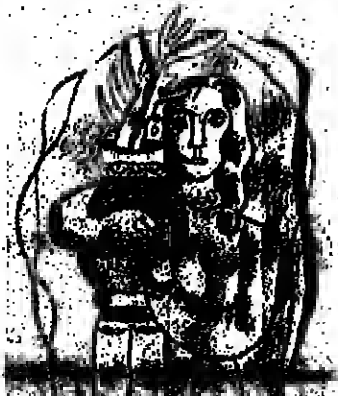
The fact that it isn't enough supports Hannah with an enduring preoccupation: a person's right to be a person in her own right. Being an intelligent woman, she understands that life contains no soft options, that being your own woman will probably involve you in mind-boggling situations, put your marriage through a difficult time, jeopardize your sex life, and even lead you to talk to the cat. Clearly, you will need a breathing space if you are to come to terms with things and be able to provide continuous advice for your friends who are all peculiarly prone to female anxieties, frustration and domestic althma.

The children of Hannah's friends contract polio or become drug addicts, among other topical miseries; husbands inconspicuously have it away with secretaries ("They tell me she wears a skirt up to her bum"); Hector's Monica runs off with a hereditarian politician named Amperson ("Notorious for his womanizing") by whom she finally conceives a child, before miscarriage and dying. Hannah, who has already assured the mother of a stricken child that every-one would be immunized against polio in the future, and advised a delighted wife to "go blonde", comforts bereaved Hector, who really loved his naughty wife, with the reminder that it was a bad experience for the doctor too. "Poor young chap... to see her slip away." Her comment on the death of her husband's hero Galskell isn't exactly cogent either. "Poor Galskell. Snuffed out. How terrible for his family."

Hector, in a state of desolation after Monica's death, journeys north

to stay with his working-class parents who still cover the dining-table with a chenille cloth between meals (Braidhead revisited). Here, a further blow is in store for him: he learns that his name is not really Aitken but Macpherson. He is the product of a moment of fecklessness behind a hedge. Back in London, appearing to everyone like a man on the edge of a precipice, Hector continues to take his troubles to Hannah, who keeps an understanding expression on her pale housewife's face. Time is passing, Beeching has closed down the branch line to Braidhead, Kennedy is murdered in Dallas, to the detriment of his wife's suit, and Hector and Ally are in trouble over a squib that misfired. Hannah takes it into her head to write a novel, with encouragement from Hector who is now going in for colourful jargon ("Can't you see she needs headspace, man?") and in the meantime engages in research for a series of articles about the poor at Christmas. "She wanted out in the real world."

The real world is not Hannah's province, however, any more than it is the author's. Where Jan Webster's novel should be factual, it is factitious; where one expects sharpness, one finds banality. It is not written with sufficient skill to make a best-seller, or with sufficient seriousness and irony to constitute an accurate survey of social change. Hannah is full of truisms, of which "Life isn't a television play" is a good example. She's wrong, though: her life is easier or as close as the author can make it.



Fernand Léger: "La Femme au Vase", a watercolour dated "39", to be included in a sale of Impressionist and Modern Watercolours and Drawings at Christie's, 8 King Street, St James's, London SW1 on Tuesday March 30.

Soul-food sisters

By Carol Rumens

CAROLINE LEAVITT:
Meeting Rozzy Halfway
294pp. Weldenfeld and Nicolson. £6.95.
0 297 780441

ANNETTE WILLIAMS JAFFEE:
Adult Education
230pp. Allen Lane. £6.95.
0 7139 1465 3

Narrated by Rozzy's younger sister Bess, *Meeting Rozzy Halfway* is the story of a talented, high-spirited Boston child who, at the age of ten, unaccountably develops what is vaguely termed a "psychosis" throughout the novel. Rozzy's symptoms - hearing voices in her head, withdrawal from people and situations - suggest schizophrenia, but her illness is never identified. Caroline Leavitt's technique of focusing much of her attention on Rozzy's immediate family suggests that she has read her R. D. Laing: her superficial reportage, however, offers no diagnostic reflections either in Laingian or any other terms. Rozzy's psychists remain shadowy, uncomprehending (and uncomprehended) figures prescribing infinite quantities of Valium. We are restricted to Bess's own childlike, intuitive view of her fascinating if exasperating sister - "Rozzy was just being Rozzy."

Nevertheless, a credible portrait of a marriage that is chillingly patriarchal and repressed under its bright exterior emerges. In such a setting, the "Beauty and the Beast" polarization of the two sisters seems tragically inevitable. Rozzy, a beautiful and striking baby, arouses extremes of protective love in her father, Ben. Bess, born two years later, cannot hope to compete. "The day of my birth", Bess tells us, "he and Rozzy were at the piano working on some simple Chopin études" (a statement from which we infer either that the author doesn't know her Chopin, or her two-year-old). Understandably, Bess spends her early childhood in Rozzy's shade.

Ben's cold, rejecting disappointment with Rozzy increases her self-destructiveness. Bess, reaching adolescence, also tries to fend off her sister's pervasive influence, but even in adolescence this charismatic and demanding personality is irresistible. Eventually the younger, duller sister is able to demonstrate her new

advantage by becoming almost entirely supportive. When Rozzy begins dating, Bess is invariably there to make it a threesome, with her sister's full consent. By a sort of osmotic process Rozzy says Bess's identity, and the latter loses interest in any relationship that does not include her sister.

All this carries conviction, though it emerges only as part of a catalogue of everyday activities that sometimes has the air of a diary kept for therapeutic purposes. Meals, for example, are listed exhaustively, as if the preparation and eating of food were this unhappy family's only form of self-expression. As new sorrows accumulate in Rozzy's adult life, Leavitt's simplicity and directness begin to pay dividends. But there are an awful lot of hamburgers and hot chocolate sundae to get through on the way.

Leavitt is a "nail" writer in her linear, diary-like outpourings; Annette Williams Jaffee is a conscious stylist, creating from material less rich in possibility than Leavitt's a more finely artful first novel. *Adult Education* is sparsely, mordant, and informed by an ironical awareness of the strengths and limitations of feminist analysis that help the narrative to transcend a somewhat fashionable theme - the sisterhood of two young women friends in the middle-class America of the 1970s.

Ulli and Becca meet on a course in Pre-Columbian Art. Their acquaintance is built up through anecdotes of conversation and reminiscence that skip easily among the decades, conjuring scenes and characters in a few bold strokes; gradually, through the sharing of child care and confidences, the friendship becomes central to both women's lives.

Jaffee's prose breathes life into characters that initially suggest racial stereotypes: Ulli is a cool and aristocratic Swedish ex-model who cooks and housekeeps to perfection, a Martha to Becca's Mary, as she herself sagaciously acknowledges. Jewish Becca has an urban, wise-cracking theatricality; it is from her rebellious vantage that the action is chiefly viewed. Ulli's clearest childhood memory is of rape by her Uncle Lars; Becca has been subjected to a homelier exploitation, by her show-biz grandfather who "tap-danced his way to a chain of Cadillac agencies when Vaudeville died" but still sees possibilities for his cute grand-daughter as the new Shirley Temple ("but with RED curls!"). He almost faints in disbelief when, having offered Becca for a series of television commercials, the young ad-man explains patently that Shirley Temple is "outdated, passé, not a fifties image".

Wryly Becca watches her ambitions become illusions. A promising dancer of 17, she is singled out and then betrayed by a suave new director with a sideline in pornography; an unplanned pregnancy delivers the coup de grace. Her marriage to the child's father, Gerry, a Harvard graduate met on a civil rights march in Alabama, begins to founder as both partners assert a sexual freedom that has more to do with misplaced romantic idealism than promiscuity. On holiday alone, in the middle of a casual affair with the Nordic Sven Ulli's image in Sven that she really loves. The problems that such a revelation might present never have to be confronted, however, for Becca arrives home to find her friend dying of a brain tumour. The flame of Becca's anarchy continues to burn brightly in the pristine setting of Adult Intensive Care, where she confronts the nurses by attempting to paint Ulli's toenails. At her friend's apparatus-surrounded deathbed, she tries to imagine that she and Ulli are in a scene from an opera, singing impassioned arias to each other.

But all Ulli can do is chew some string meat; no sounds come out. Ulli is dying a modern death. Such starkness vies with an undiluted sense of comedy - "If it happens to someone else it may not happen to you. Statistics." Somehow exuberant, moving, the book brings fresh illumination to the old obsessions by which men and women are united as they are divided - sex and death.

Echoes of the father's gently mocking remark at the hour of his greatest legal triumph, "If you can't trust your foundations, what can you trust?" reverberate through the story. When Godwin ceases to panic over adequate documentation, she does convey rather well the sense of distrust and bafflement, the enduring frustrations of mother-daughter and sisterly misunderstandings within the family. She also suggests those unavailing and contradictory impulses towards escape and security - "What was missing? For what or whom did she yearn? What else was there to aspire to?" But, faithful to the conventions of novels about "ordinary life", she takes care to leave her realism behind at the end, providing us with a mountain-top Epilogue which celebrates marriage, heterosexual harmony and family solidarity, and lies up every loose end in the book - including some which one had never noticed were there in the first place.

Human blossomings

By Peter Keating

REBECCA WEST:
1900
190pp. Weldenfeld and Nicolson. £10.
0 297 779 63 X

"When I look back to 1900 and think of the British people", Rebecca West writes, "I seem to see in my mind's eye a crowd standing quite still in the first darkness of evening, in some wide space, the gas lamps shining down on them as they all look southwards." They are looking towards South Africa and the Boer War which dominated the news that year. January opened with the Boers storming Ladysmith; by mid-summer British forces had withstood the assault, taken Pretoria, relieved Mafeking, and seemed set for victory. The year closed with Britain sending massive reinforcements to contain a new kind of Boer offensive.

In 1900, Rebecca West was eight years old, and her memories of the feelings aroused in Britain by that distant war have stayed vividly with her. There is the "rag, tag and bob-tail parade" of shabby, happy men taking an afternoon off to march down the streets of Richmond-on-Thames and spread the good news from Mafeking; the button-photographs of British generals which she and her friends were flammily at a time when the only acceptable decorations for respectable middle-class girls were "seed pearls and little silver crosses"; and the walk home at night from a Christmas party, with patriotism spilling out emotionally, the girls singing army songs and being joined in the spontaneous demonstration by equally patriotic strangers:

When my sisters and I arrived home, we told our parents what we had been doing. They stared at us in silence. "What, you have been singing in the streets?" We could not believe our ears, and stared back. Our parents' faces changed. "How nice," they said weakly. They did not remind us that singing in the street was the last infamy, and we found out later that all our friends' parents had capitulated too.

1900 is a skilful blend of documentary history, illustrations, and personal reminiscence. It contains a month-by-month calendar of events, and a good deal of further factual information listed under subject headings such as "Literature and Thought", "Music", "Architecture and Design", "Science, Technology and Medicine". Emphasis is placed on Europe rather than simply Britain, with France receiving as much attention as England, and America shuffling restlessly on the sidelines.

Facts come first, as a kind of sustained preface or list of contents. They provide a frame and a constant point of reference for the text that follows. Presented in this way, they also free Rebecca West to write as both historian and participant. She is able to evoke the turn of the century as it appeared to the eight-year-old girl, and at the same time, draw on the many and varied experiences of a committed lifetime that spans the century then about to be born. The result is an attractive, personal interpretation that offers a reliable view of the past without becoming trapped in the cold distancing of objective history.

The strong personal element comes only partly from the reminiscences. It owes just as much to Dame Rebecca's historical approach, which is almost entirely through personalities. The Conference on Labour Representation held on February 27 can be described as "the most important event in 1900", but the issues underlying this moment when the British Labour Party was formed are treated with nothing like the relish that appears later in the portrait of Beatrice Webb. "She had ability; thought it was a pity that she devoted it to the cause of lifting the poor out of poverty, for, as her diaries show, she disliked the poor, largely because they were so often stupid."

It is not that ideas, issues, and events are ignored. They are here all right, but presented always as inseparable from the people who formulated or enacted them. Even when she is writing of the Boer War, with tactics outlined and national characteristics compared, it is the personalities involved who leap most forcefully into life - Kruger, Chamberlain, Rhodes, and most notably Milner who is treated so unsympathetically that he could well be seen as the villain of 1900; if, that is, someone apparently so incapable, unimaginative and boring could possibly summon up enough energy to be villainous.

Dame Rebecca's selection of French men and women to represent the turn of the century is particularly interesting because her selection is fully engaged with what she describes as "the wholeness of French experience", an ability to assimilate diverse experiences without feeling them as threatening or destructive. Proust is seen as typifying this quality at its finest, while Colette is invoked as a more ambiguous case.

Nor is it something that is regarded as applicable only in major talents. "Everywhere human activities were flowering, growing from earth that had not been suspected of such fertility." The person then chosen to illustrate the generalization is Jacques Villen, who had grown up in the shadow of his more famous brother Marcel Duchamp, but suddenly, unexpectedly blossomed as an individual talent. Although the general reference is to Europe, the precise instance seems characteristically French; as also, in n

very different mood, does the Dreyfus affair, in its way as illustrative for France as the Boer War was for Britain.

The delight with which distinguished, now half-forgotten, individuals are brought on to replay their parts in the events of 1900 is quite unaccounted. "Let us recall Marshal Lyautey of Morocco", Dame Rebecca suggests, and a little later announces: "I have recently asked a dozen educated people if they have heard of Sir Charles Hanley, and none ever had." Lyautey and Hanley are recalled and their contributions recorded, along with such figures as Sir Frank Swettenham, Alice Koppel, Alice Roosevelt, and Sir Arthur Evans. They, in turn, join rank with those who are still actively remembered - Einstein, Freud, Henry James, Queen Victoria - and those who will eventually survive, if at all, as bizarre footnotes in social history.

There are, inevitably, gaps in 1900. There is little about sport, not enough on the music hall, not much about working conditions. We are asked to take some sweeping generalizations as self-evident truths. "Men and women do not really like each other very much", and a few judgments that demand contradiction. It does not seem sensible to describe Thomas Hardy as "the most chaste of writers", and whatever the quality of Zola's fiction in 1900, he hardly deserves to be dismissed as "not a very good novelist". But such errors of judgment are only to be expected if one put one's faith in people, and that is what Rebecca West has unashamedly done in this very good book.

Budapest specialities

By Kyril FitzLyon

GEORGE MIKES:
How to be Seventy
An Autobiography
248pp. Deutsch. £7.95.
0 233 97453 9

I must begin by declaring my interest - and my qualifications for reviewing George Mikes's autobiography: a continental background, and the knowledge, based, alas, on personal experience, of how to be seventy. In fact, my principal qualification for reviewing this book is better than Mr Mikes's is for writing it. He was not yet seventy when he wrote it, and he could therefore have had no idea, only a shrewd guess perhaps, how to be seventy. I, on the other hand, have a very good idea indeed. But he knows how to approach that great age and this is his real theme.

His recipe is, first and foremost, a happy temperament, excellent health, love of mankind - and more especially of womankind - and an optimistic outlook on life. Add to this a propensity of seeing the funny side of things and the ability to express it orally and in print (some thirty books, innumerable articles and a fund of anecdotes) and you have a very satisfactory mixture indeed, with a pleasant apell of seventy years almost guaranteed.

A happy temperament is, of course, basic to all the other ingredients. Mr Mikes points out that his sister's childhood, which was the same as his, was miserable, while his was "delightful". They both remember the same episodes, but give them an entirely different interpretation. For Mr Mikes they are so much grist to his particular mill, raw material for entertaining his listeners and readers. For he is, above all, an entertainer and his works prove that he is a highly successful one. This book is no exception: it puts the reader in a good mood and makes him wish he had the author for a friend.

This is not to say that Mr Mikes is unable to be serious. On the contrary: he can be very serious indeed about the things that matter. One of them is his Hungarian identity. It began, worrying him long before he became an expatriate in England. (He came here in 1938 as a correspondent because they were so often stupid,

and simply never went back, except as a visitor.) His father was President of the Jewish Community in the Hungarian village of Siklós - a somewhat unorthodox president, but obviously a much-loved one since he was elected in spite of the one condition he posed: that he should be allowed to continue keeping a pig, slaughter one every year and eat the sausages. Young Mikes's unorthodox stance went further. "My religion," he says, "did not mean anything to me", yet it was "the only factor" separating him from what he wanted, and felt himself to be - a Hungarian. He therefore became a Catholic and acquired a hat for the express purpose of raising it to churches, as was the Hungarian custom. A month later, he lost his oed-faith (without, it seems, ever formally abjuring it) and has remained an agnostic ever since.

But he has never abjured his Hungarian identity, however great his devotion to England which, he says, will always be "abroad" to him. He loves his mother-tongue "almost passionately" and it is to Hungarian poets that he turns whenever he is in the mood for poetry. "Nothing, absolutely nothing in my whole life," he declares with impressive fervour, "has given me more superb pleasure" than their poems. Another pleasure (as superb?) is evidently anecdotes and jokes - that too, a Hungarian inheritance. Jokes, according to him, are a "speciality of Budapest", fundamental to "Budapest culture". They are fundamental or, at least, "very important" to Mr Mikes too, and he quotes with approval and understanding the warning of a friend of his once issued to his (the friend's) wife when she owned up to being bored by one of his stories: "If a man's wife is bored by a man's stories there is one thing a man can do: change his wife. He must promise to change his stories." Mr Mikes himself has, he admits, changed his wives several times.

For him, he says, the whole of life "has been a long string of anecdotes" and now, at the age of seventy, as he contemplates his past and present and muses on the inevitable end, he comes to the sobering conclusion that as he is concerned, death, if it is lucky, "will simply be the last anecdote". What a pity he will not be there to tell it.

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Out of the bin, into the pressure cooker

By Jennifer Uglow

GAIL GODWIN:
A Mother and Two Daughters
564pp. Heinemann. £7.95.
0 34 29750 X

At the start of Gail Godwin's latest novel Leonard Strickland, an idealistic but conformist lawyer in a North Carolina town, dies of a massive coronary on his way home from a Christmas party. The novel is concerned with the reactions and relationships of his wife Nell and daughters Cate and Lydia, both in their late thirties, as the bereavement forces each of them to evaluate the achievement and purpose of their own lives.

Fairly early in this lengthy saga of self-analysis the author makes a plea for her characters to be treated as individuals, not representative types, when a paperback, *Life Crises of the Modern American Woman*, is hurled into the kitchen bin to join "the orange rings, toast crumbs, avocado

peelings, turkey bones and other wet garbage of this Christmas Day". Ranting to a chapter headed "Your Now-or-Never Years" Lydia protests "I will find my own way... I will not be regimented into one of your popular psychology categories." Near the end of the book her sister responds with similar understandable irritation to yet another novel about "women who go off to the woods to find themselves". But the representative quality, and the sense of moral failure, persist none the less in Godwin's novel. Nell is of an older generation, regretful at having abandoned her nursing career for marriage but denying strength from her belief in the principles of family, love and duty. Cate, a crusader since school, the survivor of two misjudged marriages and a series of routine academic jobs, is doomed always to sacrifice present happiness for distant ideals, while Lydia is the emergent, busy shedding of middle America, returning to college, taking a lover and transforming both her domestic virtues and her ladylike inheritance into media elite by starring in a television cookery show.

Godwin's fiction is far from innovative, but she has achieved considerable success in the United States, possibly due to her clever combination of familiar material, scrupulous scene setting and easily assimilable "philosophical" message. The central character characters must be sexually attractive whatever their age or situation, and so we have repeated reminders of their good

looks, fashion sense, hairstyles, and even dress size, accompanied by choruses of "I honestly don't believe I have ever seen her in such nice looking women in one frame". Her sister and her friends go through emotional crises which take in the whole range of female "problem issues": sexuality, abortion, childbirth, maternal anguish, jealousy, alcoholism, fragmentation of personality, career and status anxiety, breast cancer. These issues are treated evocatively rather than directly, the aim being to "move" rather than shock. Complexity is added by a supporting cast of interesting individuals, which here include a Southern *grande dame* with a pregnant teenage protégée; a postdated baron with two sons, one retarded, the other gay; a bilabial, a brail; a one-legged Vietnam veteran whose wife runs a local nursery school; a trendy (and of course beautiful) black academic who writes monographs on snobbery in black America; teenage problem children, lovers, and many more.

Godwin takes enormous care to locate the action precisely - she belongs to that school of American realists who feel not only that a daily menu is essential to the reader's credulity but that the ingredients must be listed as well ("I make it with garbanzo beans and a little touch of wine vinegar and some mayonnaise and radishes"). The descriptions of social events give rise to some splendid set pieces, but just in case we should feel this is not the "real world", the remorseless ap-

plication of detail is extended to current events - Three Mile Island, Sky-lab, the Iranian Revolution, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. A sense of weighty philosophical and social underpinning is given by the titles of the daughters' dissertations - "Designs for a New World in the poetry of D. H. Lawrence" (Cate), "Eros, friend or foe?" (Lydia), and of the films they see, the songs they hear, and the books they read: *Twilight of Capitalism*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Cool Fire*, *How to Make It on Television*, and so on.

Echoes of the father's gently mocking remark at the hour of his greatest legal triumph, "If you can't trust your foundations, what can you trust?" reverberate through the story. When Godwin ceases to panic over adequate documentation, she does convey rather well the sense of distrust and bafflement, the enduring frustrations of mother-daughter and sisterly misunderstandings within the family. She also suggests those unavailing and contradictory impulses towards escape and security - "What was missing? For what or whom did she yearn? What else was there to aspire to?" But, faithful to the conventions of novels about "ordinary life", she takes care to leave her realism behind at the end, providing us with a mountain-top Epilogue which celebrates marriage, heterosexual harmony and family solidarity, and lies up every loose end in the book - including some which one had never noticed were there in the first place.

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A scene in every number

By Jonathan Keates

ARLENE M. JACKSON:
Illustration and the Novels of Thomas
Hardy
151pp. Macmillan. £15.
0 333 32303 3

Literary illustration in the twentieth
century has come to seem neces-
sary, even important. We no longer
need or want pictures, and even if
the resurgence of the professional
illustrator for adult fiction is not in-
conceivable, it is hard to imagine an
Amis, a Murdoch or a Drabble
accompanied by plates. Given the
tendency of novelists from James
Proust (pace those wise Julian
drawings for the Scott-Moncrieff
translation) onwards to replace ac-
tion with analysis, and the gradual
disappearance in art of the represen-
tational before the abstract and sym-
bolic, it seems as if there is nothing
left for the artist to work on or with.

It must already have looked a little
like that during the 1870s, when Har-
dy's early novels began appearing.
His extraordinary precision in detail,
on which reviewers of *Far From The
Madding Crowd* were quick to com-
ment, was a good deal more helpful
than the narrative methods of other
contemporary novelists. Poor M. E.
Edwards, for example, faced with
Trollope's *The Chatterbox*, serialized
in *The Cornhill* in 1867, could do
little but pose the figures in photo-
graphic attitudes of soulful anxiety
against a blurred cross-hatching
obscure of the writer's concentra-
tion of interest on character as
opposed to surroundings. "If authors
would learn a little how to draw
themselves, they would not put such
difficulties in the artist's way",
George du Maurier plaintively noted
in *The Magazine of Art*. "It would be
a great boon if they could, however
slightly, illustrate their own work."
In *The Art Journal* Joseph Pennell
vigorously disagreed: "The most aw-
ful misfortune that may occur to an
illustrator is to be compelled to use
the photograph or sketches made by
an author; here almost certain disas-
ter awaits the artist."

Nothing so dreadful overtook
Helen Paterson, pupil of Millais and
Leighton, whose work Ruskin
forgetfully termed "forever lovely"
and who was modestly content to
accept the author's blintz in prepara-
tion of her coolly accomplished
plates for *For From The Madding
Crowd*. Hardy's readiness to consider
her "the best illustrator I ever had"
was determined by a wistful notion,
developed years afterwards in a let-
ter to Gosse, that had she not mar-
ried William Allingham and he not
been courting Emma Gifford "those
two almost simultaneous weddings
would have been one but for a stupid
blunder of God Almighty." Her
work has an amazing stylistic flexi-
bility, contrasting a scene such as the
steaming supper, showing Oak and
the rustles in swirling pre-Raphaelite
draperies amid Burne-Jonesian brier
roses, with the naturalistic severity of
the confrontation beside Fenny's
corse, where the compositional lines
formed by the coffin and the con-
torted shapes of Troy and Bethsheba
are eloquently stark.

Hardy was not always so fortun-
ate. *The Return of the Native*, re-
jected by Leslie Stephen for *The
Cornhill* because the Eustacia-
Damoc-Thomastis triangle "might
develop into something dangerous
for a family magazine", found a slot
in *Belgravia*: *A Magazine of Fashion
and Amusement*, edited by Miss
Braddon, author of *Lady Audley's
Secret*. The chosen illustrator,
Gerard Manley Hopkins's brother
Arland, was stymied by Hardy's
changing concept of the heroine, and
Arlene M. Jackson plausibly suggests
that while the artist laboured with an
earlier Eustacia (no Corboto con-
nections and no resemblance to Sopho-
ra or Mrs Siddons, as in the Wessex
Edition), her creator had already de-
veloped the more vulnerable and
complex figure of later versions.
Hardy wanted her "more youthful in
face, supple in figure, and, in gen-
eral, with a little more roundness and
softness than have been given her".

From Hopkins's Millaisian pencil she
emerges as a combination of a Gir-
ton bluestocking damozel with one of
the rapturous maidens of *Palladis*.

An increasing concern with his
illustrators' capacity to provide in-
telligent visual glosses on crucial mo-
ments in the narrative was enhanced
for Hardy during composition of *The
Trumpet Major* and *A Lodicean*.
The plates in both books represent a
suppressed cry for help from artists
clearly incapable of overcoming the
flaws inherent in the text. For the
one, John Collier, a future R. A.
and associate of Alma-Tadema, pro-
vided what must be some of the
worst engravings to any nineteenth
century novel, with figures and pro-
portions of an embarrassing inepti-
tude. For the other, George du
Maurier resumed the uneasy part-
nership which began four years pre-
viously with *The Hand of Ethelberta*.
"Think of the poor artist, please,
and give me a scene in every num-
ber, if you can". Those for whom Du
Maurier is the archetypal chronicler
of feds and fooleries in the High Art
drawing rooms of 1870s Punch can
scarcely view his Hardy illustrations
without a sense of their ludicrous
inappropriateness. His versions of
Somerset and Paula, Lord Mount-
clere and Ethelberta, fustily upbol-
stered grotesques, are simply Edwin
and Angelina and Mr and Mrs Pon-
sonby de Tomkyns minus their ex-
tended captions.

The London agent for Harper's,
which serialized *A Lodicean*, noted
that Du Maurier "owned up that he
was better at working his own will in
social satire rather than under the
limitations of other people's stories".
Fraught as it was, their collaboration
cemented a friendship between artist
and author, and taught Hardy a good
deal more about the technical aspects
of plate-making. Yet the experience
seems, at the same time, to have put
paid to any further direct contact
with illustrators. He was apparently
indifferent to the painstaking authen-
ticity of Robert Barnes's work on
The Mayor of Casterbridge, sym-
pathetic though it invariably is to the
unique nature of the story as an
essay in rural history. Odder still was
his lack of interest in the representa-
tion of Tess, whose consignment to
Hubert Herkimer and a team of
three students in *The Graphic*'s 1891
serialization seems like an ironic
echo of her fate in the book.

There is a dramatic aptness in the
sudden change of pictorial style
marked by the Herkimer plates. The
long Pre-Raphaelite shadow, extend-
ing from the Moxon Tennison of
1857 through the entire world of
Victorian book illustration, has given
place to a Parisian art school manner
strongly influenced by Millot, Meis-
sonnier and Rosa Bonheur. Tess
among the bleeding peasants be-
comes a Norman *payenne*, and the
implications of Herkimer's insidiously

Nice one, Keats

By Mark Casserley

WILLIAM WALSH:
Introduction to Keats
150pp. Methuen. £7.95 (paperback,
£3.25).
0 416 30490 7

Any introduction to Keats has to
reckon with the mythology surround-
ing his life and to make his poetry,
which some find repellent, fully pre-
sented to a modern reader. In William
Walsh's view, in order to understand
its significance the student has to
respond to Keats's work as a "very
"in a purely educative experience".

The organization of the book is
consistent with an understanding of
Keats's career as "a brilliant, pro-
found and exemplary exercise in self-
education". It begins with "the open-
ing sensibility", then considers the
early poetry, and goes on to discuss
the poet's personal development.
"The education of sensibility", draw-
ing on an earlier article by Professor



"What an escape," he said.

An illustration by George du Maurier for Hardy's *A Lodicean*, which
appeared in Harper's New Monthly Magazine, February 1881, from the
book reviewed here. See also the review of an exhibition of work by
another of Hardy's illustrators, Hubert van Herkimer, in Commentary on
page 250.

erotic treatment of this meeting with
Alec at the fire, lodge the novel
firmly in a kind of Deudai-Maupas-
sant world far removed, as its early
critics noted, from the family read-
ership of the serial magazines.

Dr Jackson's survey, the first to
tackle this fascinating subject, shows
a refreshing determination to under-
line its significance not merely in
connection with Hardy but with the
whole field of Victorian fiction from
Dickens onwards. She draws our
attention to Pre-Raphaelite influence
in asserting the primacy of emblem-
atic detail as so old to the reader in
search of signals from the narrative,
and convincingly suggests that a

reasonably competent artist could ex-
tend the life of a novel by elaborat-
ing upon the descriptive touches
offered by the writer. More might
have been said of the effect of
photography, simultaneously distur-
bing and celebrating intimacy, and
a wider sweep might have been made
of comments by other novelists on
the nature and degree of illustration.
With its handsome batches of exam-
ples and a detailed analysis of the art
work in each of the major serializa-
tions (*The Woodlanders*, published in
Mocmillan's, was without plates of
any sort) this is an outstanding con-
tribution towards our appreciation of
the links between the nineteenth cen-
tury writer and reader.

Welsh, is followed by chapters on
the letters to George and Georgina
Keats and to Fanny Browne, and
finally a discussion of the late poems.
The author avowedly draws on the
work of others for his biographical
material, providing his own moraliz-
ing and explicatory gloss. This
approach shows many parallels with
Revelation, but while Leavis con-
fined himself to the poetry in over-
hauling Keats's achievement, Walsh
makes extensive use of the letters.

Through quotation and additional
commentary, the reader is encour-
aged to respond to Keats as a man
and as an example: "It is impossible
to exaggerate the simple human nice-
ness of Keats." A famous passage,
such as the vision of life as a men-
sion of many apartments, is praised
(as so often in this book) simply by
having epithets thrown at it: "In this
astonishing statement Keats sees the
individual's life as a way reminiscent
both of the Bible and Shakespeare".
Anything ambiguous or less than se-
rious makes Walsh uneasy.

Walsh is also uncomfortable with
softness and ambiguity in the poetry,
and he prefers to deal out emphatic

judgments, especially on poems con-
demned as derivative or immature,
rather than attempt to show what is
happening in them. The superiority
of the late *Odes* over, say, *Endymion*
is not in doubt, but the absence of
sufficient explanatory material or cri-
tical exegesis is likely to cause a
flattering of the reader's response.

A literary reputation is the vector
of competing myths. In this book
Keats is being saved from the view
that his achievement is flawed by the
emotional self-indulgence of a "ver-
styling pet-lamb". Walsh's particular
omphs may also result from a de-
sire to correct a second attitude
sensed in his potential audience's
first-blush infatuation with the musio-
al in Keats, combined with sen-
simentality about his sufferings.
Another myth is, however, offered
by this book, since the emphasis on
Keats's heroic acceptance of personal
misery and on his strenuousness of
mind, as opposed to "modish literary
chat", has its own appeal. All the
same, the enthusiasm of Walsh's in-
troduction may provoke readers into
ransacking the bibliography for
alternative approaches.

DESIGN

Connoisseur of the contemporary

By Martin Pawley

REYNER BANHAM:
Design by Choice
Edited by Penny Sparke
152pp. Academy Editions, 7 Holland
Street, London, W8. £9.50.

Somewhere in his massive journalis-
tic output for the year 1965 Reyner
Banham wrote a piece about Formula
One cars, with much use of
phrases like "chassis design", "neg-
ative corner", "scrub angle" and so
on. Dennis Berry, then head of
Kingston School of Architecture,
wrote a letter pointing out some
quite fundamental errors and offered
corrections. In a defence published
with Berry's letter, Banham re-
marked that it was a great pleasure
to receive a truly technical letter
from a reader and not the usual
"fuming cuckoo-spit". About the
alleged errors he said not a word.

Design by Choice is a collection of
thirty-one of the 397 articles Reyner
Banham claims responsibility for
over the past twenty-five years. It
covers his progression as a writer on
architecture and popular culture—
from art historian to architectural
historian to commentator to Ameri-
canophile to expatriate—and con-
tains some of the best as well as the
most characteristic of his ephemera.
Banham is still fifty-one per cent
right in what he has written: "A
Home is not a House" (1965) re-
mains as brilliant as ever. But in-
cluded, too, is "A Grid on two
Farthings" (1960), with its fatuous
prophecy that the name of the inven-
tor of the Moulton bicycle will join
those of Bessemer, Panhard and
Diesel in immortality. Other essays
cover subjects as varied as Sant'Ella,
Sunset Boulevard, Coventry
Cathedral, Jaguars, Mustangs and
Star Wars.

"handle heavy matters with light
equipment", but his editor sees "ex-
pendability" and "fun" as major
themes. It is true that heavy matters
are mentioned in Banham's articles
and phrases like "Capitalist-type
society", "internal subversion",
"Nazi revanchism" and "the crisis of
the adult education movement in the
face of the Boats" crop up from
time to time; but he also writes
knowingly of "handling a plump,
drunk, amiable, unstable girl at a
party", of "keeping abreast of Play-
boy" (in the *Architect's Journal*, of

1967 thought it important to advise
readers of *New Society* and "Peter
Hall, wonder boy of English town
planning, is about to buy a Ford
Mustang to commute between London
and Reading."

Cars indeed figure extensively in
these pages, perhaps because they
are a genuine fusion of heavy matter
with expendability and fun. Banham
clearly believes they are his forte,
and, truth to tell, he probably does
know more about them than most
Courtauld graduates, but his wisdom

and an American V-8 upon which he
embarked in the pages of *Industrial
Design* in 1961. Banham, of course,
knows that Le Corbusier admired
Ettore Bugatti's engines (at least he
did in 1923), going so far as to
illustrate one alongside the brier pipe
and the Parthenon in the pantheon
of *Vers une Architecture*. Banham
also knows that purism, the idea that
engineering evolves towards classic
forms, is either wrong or at least
operates over such an extended time-
scale that to claim any kind of clas-
sical plateau in the 1920s is absurd.

especially if you are a former en-
gineering apprentice from an aircraft
company.

For a start Banham does not mean
that the engine of the Type-41
Bugatti illustrated in the article is a
straight-eight with all its cylinders in
line, which explains its two-dimen-
sionality; nor does he identify the
"flunting accessories" which it con-
ceals and the V-8 reveals, or indeed
adequately explain the fact that since
both engines are totally enclosed
when in use the "wild rhetoric of
power" is reserved for the mechanic
who changes the oil. It is, of course,
true that the American V-8 has more
accessories than the straight-eight of
thirty years before: it has a belt-
driven power steering pump and an
air-conditioning compressor, but
these innovations have nothing to do
with Mondrian and Jackson Pol-
lock, they are the result of technol-
ogical evolution in the field of en-
vironmental control (taming steering
torque and keeping out the heat of
the summer), which is after all a
Banham subject par excellence. His
1969 book *Architecture of the Well-
Tempered Environment* deals with it
at length. Odd that he should avoid
a subject he does know something
about in favour of one that he does
not.

It is necessary to go into this sort
of detail in order to come to grips
with the issues raised by the articles
in the present collection. If it seems
picaresque, that is because it is:
Banham was right much of the time,
in any case. Surely, then, these
errors are unimportant? Well, re-
issuing them makes them less so than
when they were buried in the incom-
prehensibility of last week's issue. It
may have been all right in 1967 to
write about the amazing hulk, but
today we all know he is incredible
and repeating the error merely
throws doubt upon all the other dis-
tillations of the essence of the epoch
in these pages.



Rambler Ambassador V8, 1960; from the book under review.

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Jonathan Cape

commentary

Success in an adopted country

By David Alexander

A Passion for Work
Sir Hubert von Herkimer, 1849-1914
Watford Museum

It is appropriate that the new Watford Museum, which is in the former Benskin's brewery house next to Watford High Street Station, should have Herkimer as the subject of its first art exhibition (until March 10). It was at nearby Bushey that Herkimer settled in his early twenties, at the period when he was making a living with realist illustrations for the *Graphic*. The young artist's attitude was coloured not only by the influence of German social realism, felt during a short period at the Munich Academy, but also by his own family's struggles in America and England after they had left Bavaria when he was a child. Unlike many of the elderly or distressed whom he depicted, Herkimer was able to do something about his poverty: 'a passion for work' was his own phrase and the exhibition gives a good idea of his energy and the range of his artistic activities.

Herkimer made his reputation with works such as 'The Last Master' (RA 1875), a once-famous picture of Chelsea pensioners worked up from a *Graphic* sketch, and he continued to think of the recording of such scenes to be one of his major tasks. But he made his fortune with his portraits, soon finding that he was being thought of as 'the painter of old men'. A selection of portraits is on display, which show, however, that he did not only use the subdued palette of a realist painter, but also borrowed two later realist pictures, 'Hard Times' and 'On Strike' which contrast with two pictures of village life for which social comment was not the motive.

Herkimer (the 'von' was granted by the Kaiser in 1899) acquired a great love of the English countryside and among the surprises of the exhibition are his landscape studies in



Tess and Alec D'Urberville fighting the fire, one of Hubert Herkimer's illustrations for Tess of the D'Urbervilles, which was serialized in the *Graphic* in 1891. The picture is taken from illustration and the Novels of Thomas Hardy, by Arlene M. Jackson, reviewed on page 258

watercolour and oils, some apparently made from the back of his Dalmatian after he took up motoring in 1903. But this was relaxation after the exhausting work of many years. In 1883 he had set up an art school at Bushey, which he was to run for just over twenty years; this is not covered in any detail, partly because the museum hopes to mount a separate exhibition in the future. He was also much engaged in printmaking, devising a process for steel-facing unprinted monotypes which he called Herkimergraving, and also for a short time in this production of engravings.

Much time, and even more money, was devoted to the building of his remarkable house in Bushey,

Lululand. This had an exterior based on designs by the American architect H. H. Richardson, and interiors created with the help of his craftsmen father and uncles. The house was demolished in the 1930s, after the local council refused to accept it; otherwise we might be seeing the present exhibition there rather than in the slightly cramped surroundings of the Watford Museum.

After von Herkimer gave up the direction of the Bushey school in 1903 he was able to devote more time to writing and his two-volume *The Herkimer* appeared in 1910; the extreme self-confidence which this reveals was no doubt an important factor behind success in an

adopted country. A final interest shown by this versatile man was in making films, but none of his films appear to have survived.

Herkimer certainly deserves to be rescued from the obscurity which has been his fate. No special exhibition catalogue has been produced, but the Museum has instead compiled a booklet which includes a summary of his career, a list of the Museum's holdings of Herkimer material, and revealing essays on his debt to Fred Walker by Rosemary Treble and on his depiction of social subjects by Lee M. Edwards. *A Passion for Work* (50pp with 16 plates, 0 907958 00 1, £1 plus postage, 30p inland) is available from the Museum, 194 High Street, Watford, Herts.

paintings have none of the chaos found in the work of Dali, whose technique Frampton admired, but they are in their own way bizarre.

The friction between the isolated ingredients and the perfect design of the whole parallels Frampton's position in twentieth-century art. These paintings demonstrate his originality at the same time as they reveal his close connections with established society. Like an eighteenth-century hermit employed to live in the grove of a country-house estate, Frampton enjoyed licensed eccentricity, producing an art that stretched tradition without disturbing its foundations.

Fifty years on...

On March 3, 1932 the *TLS* carried the following review of Midsommer Night Madness, Sean O'Faolain's first volume of short stories:

Mr Edward Garnett contributes an interesting preface to Mr. Sean O'Faolain's first volume of short stories, *Midsommer Night Madness* (Cape, 7s. 6d., net). ... he concludes by saying: 'If one wished to depict the vulgar one would say he is a poet at heart.' It is, in fact, from these qualities which Mr. Garnett almost fears to mention, sensitive appreciation of the melancholy charm of the Irish countryside, poetic perception of the beauty latent in the quieter human emotions, that Mr. O'Faolain derives his inspiration. Like many English and German writers of today who have reacted from the

claims of war, he is a romanticist caught in the toils of reality.

All these stories take place during the Black-and-Tan period and the later years of the irregular campaign. The title of the book indicates sufficiently Mr. O'Faolain's mode of reaction. He shows us human nature distorted by political, religious and racial passions; he depicts objectively a mental world of distorted values, a world in which a cowardly murderer may pass as patriot while a sexual sin is regarded with sympathetic horror. He deepens that sense of fantastic unreality which must always puzzle the thoughtful in a time of mob passions. His method depends upon abrupt character contrast; and the changes, the exigencies of guerrilla warfare, enable him to bring his characters together in totally unexpected situations. Nothing could be

more fantastic, for instance, than the setting of his story entitled 'The Small Lady'. ... Such a story as 'The Patriot' is more convincing, for the facts themselves are sufficiently fantastic, and this excellent sketch of a woodwinder, head of irregulars, utterly without discipline or plan, lingers in the mind. In the title story, however, Mr. O'Faolain justifies his experimental method: Hano, the aged libertine and aristocrat, the gunner who argue with him in his decaying mansion while they drink from his decanters and eat his food, the betrayed girl - all these characters of a midsommer night are wonderfully realized, and in this regard the fantasy ideas of several generations meet; though fraught with dark implications the story is conveyed in a mood of play and understanding.

An international affair

By Julian Symons

Reds
Empire Cinema, Leicester Square

Jack Reed, born in 1887, was the nice American boy who turned Red before the colour became fashionable. A firmly respectable background in Portland, Oregon, education at Portland Academy, then Harvard - but at Harvard Reed showed interest in the Anarchist Club and Henry George's Single Tax theories. He was soon a radical journalist, enthralled by Big Bill Haywood and the 'Wobblies' (International Workers of the World) militants, excited by Pancho Villa and the Mexican Revolution of 1913, and happily blending political radicalism with Greenwich Village love affairs.

'I suppose I'll always be a Romanticist', he wrote in 1917 three years before his death, and a romantic desire for action moved him always towards social revolt and rebellion. It was almost inevitable that he should be around as a reporter when the Bolsheviks took power in Russia in 1917. He was in the Smolny Institute, at the Winter Palace, and he interviewed Lenin and Trotsky. His *Ten Days That Shook The World* carried an introduction by Lenin, and remains the most dramatic and vivid account of those astonishing weeks. Back home in America, Reed became involved in the bitter wrangling around the foundation of an American Communist Party. His factional fight with Louis Fraina was taken back to the Comintern for decision, and there Reed fell foul of Zinoviev and Rasdek. His bitterness when decisions were reached without adequate discussion was such that he

resigned his post as a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, although the resignation was quickly withdrawn. A few weeks later he contracted typhus, and died in Moscow, Lenin ordered a state funeral.

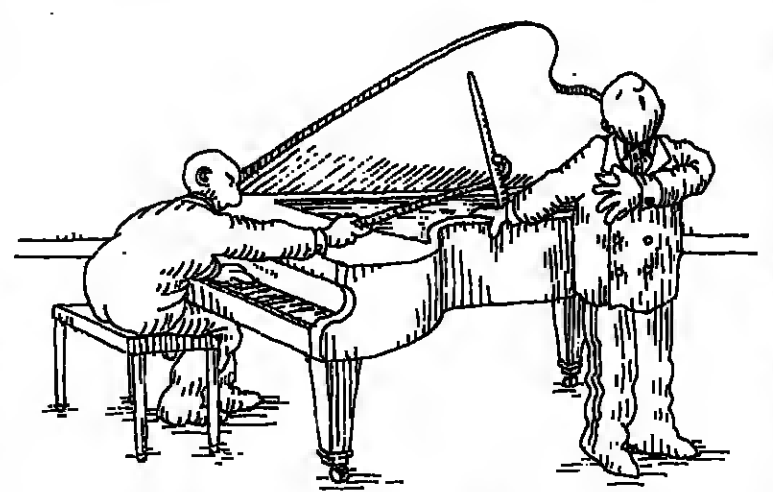
John Reed's life has meaning only in the context of politics, but this is not a political film. It is, instead, an account of the love affair and marriage of Reed and Louise Bryant, former wife of a Portland dentist, an excitable and erratic figure who also had aspirations to journalism, and even wrote a book about 'My Six Months in Russia'. Their off-and-on love affair occupies the first half of the film. Is politics or Louise really Jack's first love? Will she succumb to Eugene O'Neill, rarely seen without a bottle of whisky in his hand, who

says that if she was his girl he wouldn't leave her alone with her work as Jack does, she would be 'the centre of everything'? Will Louise go to Russia with him in 1917 (yes), will she disapprove of his later involvement in factional infighting (of course - 'You're a writer, Jack, you're an artist'), will she refuse to return to Russia with him (she will)? And will she make a desperate journey back to Moscow when she fears that he is in trouble, stowing away on a Norwegian freighter and crossing vast icy wastes, so that she can be there at the death? You bet.

Much of this happened, but to place the relationship between Jack and Louise at the centre of the film is to falsify the whole thrust and meaning of Reed's life. More than this, Louise becomes the chief char-

acter; hot-tempered but basically sensible Louise who is always trying to keep wayward Jack from getting mixed up in those silly political arguments. Diane Keaton curls a pretty lip at the political talk and throws some fine tantrums, Warren Beatty conveys very well Reed's boyish enthusiasm, Jack Nicholson as O'Neill is whimsical and worldly-wise, but this is soap opera with political flavouring. *Ten Days* does get a mention, when Louise says 'He's going to write a great book', and then a voice-over gives us a few lines about the great book Jack has written. The script is often as clumsy as that. One particularly unhappy scene shows Reed making a mess of cooking a meal while talking in voice-over about the revolution. Poor impractical Jack.

The device of providing a commentary through thirty-odd 'witnesses' is ingenious but unsuccessful. A few of them knew Reed or Bryant, but their real use is as substitute for action. They take us through the indigestible political bits, and offer opinions about what's happening. The liveliest of them, Dame Rebecca West, Dora Russell, Henry Miller, had no connection with Reed and no sympathy with the causes for which he fought throughout his adult life. It is true that some incidents need explanation for those not politically minded. The intricacies of the battle between Reed and Fraina, and of Reed's struggle against a Zinoviev quite remarkably unlike the real Zinoviev in appearance, are likely to be obscure to many people, but such problems are inherent in any film concerned with John Reed's life. The treatment here offers no solutions, but is simply an avulsion. The film's subtitle might be 'How to trivialize a political life and a Revolution in three hours, nineteen minutes'.



One of Simon Bond's cartoons from *Unspeakeable Acts* (Methuen, £2.50 0 413 49620 1), which will be published on March 11.

Accurately untruthful

By T. J. Binyon

Absence of Malice
Odeon Cinema, Leicester Square

The hero of Sydney Pollack's new film, Michael Gallagher (Paul Newman), is a Miami liquor wholesaler. Not, perhaps, the business one would expect to find Paul Newman in, but then Gallagher isn't your ordinary wine merchant. His father was the best-known bootlegger in the state, and his uncle Milderone is the top local mobster. Gallagher himself is as honest as the day is long, but these links with organized crime cause a keen, not too scrupulous federal investigator (Bob Balaban), stymied in his search for the hitman who knocked off a prominent union official, to look into Gallagher's life. The information that this is happening is leaked to Megan Carter (Sally Field), a smart reporter on the *Miami Standard*. The paper's legal eagle gives her the go-ahead: 'We may say what we like about Mr. Gallagher, and he is powerless to do us harm. Democracy is served.' She prints the article; Gallagher loses his reputation, his business and his best friend.

Up to this point the film, as others have pointed out, is a kind of anticlude to *All the President's Men* (and in its assertion that to be of a family is not necessarily to be of the family, it is an antidote to *The Godfather* as well). Not everything is news, it says, and not all news should be printed. This isn't a view of course, that appeals to Megan's editor, who gets her to sharpen up her articles with the investigative journalist's universal let-out: 'People have the right to know.' Nor is it even half-way comprehensible to Megan, who greets Gallagher's refusal to tell everything in exchange for nothing with an outraged cry of: 'You can't tell me that!'

innocence elicits a beautiful look of resigned stupefaction from Paul Newman.

The second half of the film, however, in which Gallagher sets about getting the engineers hot with their own petard, is a disappointment. It lacks the thrust of the opening: it is a step down to a variant of the caper movie. Actions replace words. The background music, absent or unnoticed up to now, jangles its way obtrusively into the picture as Gallagher ducks in and out of phone booths, acting up fake assignments and laying false trails. The suspicion begins to form that the film isn't really willing to confront the issues it

raises, and hardens the conclusion reveals an unmistakably soft centre. Justice is dispensed and morality satisfied, the bad guys are rebuked and the good ones congratulated by a folksy father-figure with a backwoods accent and a tea-strainer moustache - an Assistant Attorney-General (Wilford Brimley) brought in in the last reel to clear up the mess. We end with an elegiac coda; Megan and Gallagher saying goodbye, instead of with the sharper preceding scene showing the bitter blow. Megan interviewed about her relationship with Gallagher by a fellow reporter, 'Would you say you were involved with him?' 'It's accurate,

but it isn't true,' she replies, summing up the film's idea. But the disappointment is only comparative; the film only falls by reason of the high standard set and the equally high expectations aroused in the opening scene. Karl Luedtke, a former journalist, has used his knowledge of the newspaper world to good effect in writing an intelligent and witty screenplay. Sydney Pollack's direction is sharp and efficient. Paul Newman and Sally Field don't miss a trick, but then neither does anyone else in the cast. It may not start a crusade for a more responsible press, but it's great entertainment.

Dance of death

By Nick Roddick

Blood Wedding
Camden, Piazza Cinema

Of all major European directors, Carlos Saura is the one whose films are least known in Britain. Perhaps this is something to do with being Spanish; for most British cinema-goers, Spanish cinema begins and ends with Buñuel. Saura's *La Caza* (1965) had some distribution to Britain; *Piñero* (1967) was shown on BBC2 in the late 1960s; but only his mastery *Cinco Cuervos* (1976) was widely seen here. His extraordinary essay in Bergmanesque family analysis, *Elisa, Vida Mia*, and his political thriller, *Los Ojos Vendados* and *Deprisa, Deprisa*, are still unseen here. All the stranger, therefore, that *Blood Wedding* should be singled out by Arlindo Silva for British release.

Od the face of it, it is the ultimate, sentimental non-sensory, a short (72 minutes) documentary about Aragón

Gades's dance version of Lorca's *Bodas de Sangre*. Neither a 'film version' of the ballet (let alone of Lorca) nor even a record of a performance, it is what Saura has called a 'document on creation': a filmed record of the rehearsal of Gades's ballet. What is more, to anyone unfamiliar with Lorca's plays, the action is likely to remain unclear. In short, *Blood Wedding* has British audiences with about as many handicaps as one could imagine. And yet it is an extraordinary film, more than denying the effort it initially demands. Paradoxically for a play, it is a film in which the first and foremost is not the words; his language translates badly, forcing one constantly to reach through the words to the power of the imagery and the folk myths on which it is based. Gades's choreography, which draws heavily on popular dance forms like flamenco and pasodoble, restores to *Blood Wedding* the essential element of folk tragedy, connecting the rarefied story of two lovers caught between family feuds and peasant superstitions to the very sources on

which Lorca drew. And Saura's camera responds with absolute certainty to the movements and positioning of the dancers, coming in close when the movements are small and intimate, sweeping along beside the dancers in exact parallel to the broader figures of the choreography.

At the end of the warm-up, the dancers move diagonally one at a time across the studio towards the camera, building a simple intensity of rhythm and sound by clapping that not even the climactic knife fight equals. And, in the wedding dance, Gades stands impassively against a window as the guests dance unseen; suddenly, he moves - and the camera with him - straight into a passionate dance with the bride. There is no cut, just a break in the film of great suppressed power. In this film of great suppressed power, not so much something created out of nothing, as the perfect response to a unique ballet. For all its apparent self-effacement, Saura's film offers more moments of pure visual excitement than all the *Death Wish* in the world.

New Oxford books: History

Germany and the Far Eastern Crisis 1931-1938

A Study in Diplomacy
and Ideology
John P. Fox

The story of Germany's Far Eastern policies from 1931 to 1938 is as extremely complex, and reflects many of the power struggles which were a daily feature of life in the Nazi state. Dr Fox's point of focus for this period is the part played by the German Foreign Office, the Wilhelmstrasse; both in its position in the formulation of policy, and its ideas on what that policy should be. £20

Gladstone: Church, State, and Tractarianism

A Study of his Religious
Ideas and Attitudes
1809-1859
Perry Butler

This is a study of one aspect of Gladstone frequently alluded to, but never before examined in any depth. The author concentrates on Gladstone as a churchman and theologian in the first thirty years of his life: his move from evangelical to High-Churchman; his ideas on Church and State; and his relationship with Tractarianism (the Oxford Movement). The book ends in 1859 with Gladstone's acceptance of office under Palmerston. £17.50

Slavery, War, and Revolution

The British Occupation
of Saint Domingue
1793-1798
David Patrick Geggus

A dual study of British intervention in the Saint Domingue Revolution, this book treats the military occupation of 1793-1798 both as an aspect of Britain's imperial and military policy, and, more particularly, as a window on the most materially successful of West Indian societies in the process of disintegration. £28

Fisher Row

Fishermen, Bargemen,
and Canal Boatmen in
Oxford, 1500-1900
Mary Prior

Occupational communities were a feature of towns in the past, but they have been neglected by urban historians. This book is a study of such a community over a period of four hundred years. Fisher Row, in Oxford, was a community of Thames fishermen and bargemen, and later of canal boatmen also. Its evolution is traced in detail from the sixteenth century to its dissolution within living memory. Illustrated £22.50

Parliaments and English Politics Conrad Russell

This book will undoubtedly prove to be one of the most important, and certainly the most provocative, that have appeared on early modern British politics for many years. *Historical Journal*. This is a corrected paperback reprint. £8.95

Oxford
University Press

commentary

Mixing mockery and homage

By Peter Kemp

Noises Off
Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith

Michael Frayn's new play is a farce about farce taking the clichés of the genre, and shaking them inventively through a series of kaleidoscopic put-teries. Never missing a trick, it has its first act a *pastiche* of traditional farce: as its second, a contemporary variant on the formula: us third, an elaborate undermining of it. The play opens with a touring company dress-rehearsing *Nothing On*, a conventional farce. Mixing mockery and homage, Frayn heaps into this play-within-a-play a hilarious mélange of stock characters and situations. Curricatures – cheery chor, outraged wife and squeaky blingie – stamped in and out of doors. Voices risk and in users-fall. There are frenetic undressings, dressing-ups, and dressings-down.

All of this periodically hits on the rehearsing cast bluff lines and muffs noises. Stepping out of the stereotypes they are playing, they reveal themselves as another set of stereotypes: muzzy old troupier, dim-wit highline, self-dramatizing show-stopper. Just enough emerges about their inter-relationships to suggest that they themselves are wobbling on the brink of the clandestine scamperings of farce.

The play's second act splendidly propels them through such motions. In a master-stroke, Frayn twists his set around. We witness the start of *Nothing On* again: but, this time, from behind the scenes as it is performed at a mid-week matinee. The doors of the set open and slam with the familiar lunatic rapidity, but ev-

everything is now inverted. With members of the cast manically at odds, it is backstage that the comedy is really fast and furious. Behind the scenes, things run crazily truer in farcical type than in the play that is being performed out front in a tiny audience of OAP's ("There's quite a crowd at the front of the back stalls", the anaemically hopeful ASM has murmured in worried encouragement).

Having first parodied a farce, then brilliantly engineered his own, Frayn finally sabotages one. The touring play, in the last act, is on its last legs. Behind-scenes life and booziness spill sloppily on to the stage. The set of *Nothing On*, as we start to watch its first scene again, is the familiar framework of doors, french windows, stairs. But the play's shape is suddenly pushed askew by lack of control. Demonstrating how farce depends on precision, clockwork punctuality of exits and entrances, Frayn carefully lets things become unsynchronized until the play slips into a pile up of disastrous collisions, buckled business, and wrecked lines. Chaos escalates, but the cast still valiantly struggles to pretend that everything is as it should be.

Frayn has said that *Noises Off* attempts to spotlight "the front that people put up all the time and the fact that they will do anything so long as they keep up appearances." *Feydeau's* great strength as a writer of farce, Frayn feels, is his awareness that "the characters really have to be on the point of profound embarrassment, hand sweating and all that. Farce is about panic." This, perhaps, is why vigorous specimens of it are now in short supply. With the weakening of traditional sources of embarrassment, such as rigid stan-

dards of respectability, comes a corresponding weakening of the sense of comic outrage when such codes are breached. Accordingly, contemporary farce inhabits a never-never world of anachronistic primness or it tries to give a new dimension to the formula by technical ingenuity. *Noises Off* has profited from the study of farces such as Shaffer's *Black Comedy* in which lighting conventions were illuminatingly reversed; or Ayckbourn's *Norman Conquests* trilogy, in which the action of its three plays occurred simultaneously but in different rooms of the same house. Frayn's most skilful move, however, has been to hit upon a present-day equivalent to the social world of Feydeau to whom *Noises Off* pays much tribute (the inarticulacy of the juvenile lead, for instance, preventing him from passing on vital information, seems an amused nod towards the cleft palate that creates such mayhem in *Ellen in Her Ear*). Frayn's actors, trying to sustain a performance with such doomed desperation, are the descendants of Feydeau's bothered bourgeois gamely struggling to keep up a decent front.

Juggling expertly with its own stock in trade, *Noises Off* is a farce that makes you think as well as laugh. That it does make you laugh on such a lavish scale is due in no small measure to its superbly drilled cast. It would be invidious to single out any individual performances in a company who have so clearly seen that meticulously rehearsed ensemble work is essential to farce. Impeccable blunderers, they give the most immaculate performance conceivable, each bringing to his part that blend of parody and affection, intelligence and gusto, that Frayn has triumphantly brought to the play as a whole.

The comic archetype

By Christopher Wintle

Commedia
Sadler's Wells Theatre

The chief difficulty with Edward Cowie's first opera *Commedia*, lies in the paradox at the heart of his revival of the Commedia dell'Arte tradition: the characters are resuscitated only to be deprived of what makes them truly comic. "Looking at the accounts of the ancient improvised scenes filled me with a keenness to work these structures into a more 'timeless' plot", the composer explains, "... one which would take potency into view from any point in time. If Harlequin, Columbine, Dottore and the others are archetypal, then I could bring them into my own fantasy world". And he defines his fantasy world in pastoral terms: "I can see Commedia as one of those works which resonate with the natural world". Obligingly, the prevalent innately plebeian libretto represents an extended rumination on "hot summer", "cool autumn", "gold sun", "silver moonlight", "hissing snakes" and so forth. This forms a backdrop against which the central allegory is set: Harlequin is the Romantic dreamer, incapable of true love; Pantalone treasures jewels more than women; Dottore's love is merely bookish. At the conclusion they are all condemned to death by Brighella, here elevated into a ubiquitous Prospero-figure, at once the master and judge of his troupe of "shadows". Only Columbine, the spirit of love, survives.

But archetypes are not entertaining *per se*. Nor can the ineluctable demands of comedy be so easily sidestepped. For although comedy is undeniably nurtured by darker undertones, one is often dependent upon a self-conscious play with its own conventions, not upon the "timeless", but upon its sense of the here and now. Without an acute control of pacing and timing, and the language and forms that go with it, it is nothing. This was something that Goldoni – at whose hands, according to Cowie, the Commedia dell'Arte "died the death during the eighteenth century" – certainly knew. In the second act of *The Venetian* Columbine, the servants of the betrothed Zuanetto and Rosaura respectively, accidentally meet for the first time. Both know that their marriage has been arranged by their master and mistress to "keep the money in the family". Their exchange is not only poignant and witty, but also alive to the absurdity of the situation: "Columbine: My husband! Harlequin: My bride! Columbine: But you're nice! Harlequin: And

you're pretty! Columbine: What a lovely surprise! Harlequin: What a relief... (but what a risk I was taking! She might have had a squint and no teeth!)"

By comparison, Starsmore's libretto seems feeble and sentimental. The following shows the reunion of the characters at the end of his second act: "Harlequin: Columbine! At last I've found a fitting partner. How could you ever leave me? Columbine: Harlequin! (She moves towards him and kisses him full on the lips.) Contessa: Pantalone, you are welcome in my garden. Welcome! Pantalone: This is a beautiful garden. But surely I'm right: you should be so? Dottore! Pantalone: A garden is the work of men, and cultivated to a plan. Contessa: Lizards are slipping by... Brighella: Human schemes are fantasy; dance around the apple tree! (Chorus and soloists weave a tapestry of song...)"

Cowie's music is all too much of a piece with the tone of this libretto: it is insufficiently focused harmonically and rhythmically to make sharply telling points; it has very little variety in its sense of pacing; and its dense textural consistency eventually proves numbing and oppressive. This is disappointing, it is because, taken in short sketches, the musical idiom is in itself an attractive one: the texture, that of a chamber-concerto (intricate solo wind and brass parts superimposed on a basis of strings, supplemented by percussion and harpsichord), has an individual melodicness, and shows a nice capacity for lyric expansion, notably in the narrative passages, which are the opera's strongest feature. But the score is insufficiently dramatic for the elaborate stage action, which, especially in the Harlequin scenes, involves the whole troupe for much of the time. It is rather as if the crisp, Hogarthian tableaux of Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* were accompanied by the opoque, luxuriant music of Tippett's *The Midsummer Marriage*.

On the other hand, the composer could scarcely have wished for a more enterprising production by the New Opera Group, now celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary. The variegated colours of the costumes were resourcefully matched by the punkish hair-dos, while the gratefully coalescing geometric shapes of the sets effectively projected the seasons that changed across the four acts. The acrobatics of David Freeman's characteristic production provided some of the evening's best moments (in the war story, especially: the standard of singing was high (Terese Cahill as Columbine, and Fiona Kim as Contessa made the most of their set pieces); and the music was sensitively shaped by James Lockhart.



Author, Author

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than Friday, March 26. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers to be opened, or falling within the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration. Entries should be addressed to the Editor, Times Literary Supplement, PO Box 7, 200 Oxford Inn Road, London: WC1X 0BB, and marked "Author, Author" on the envelope. The solution and results will appear on April 2.

1 "Try to be Shakespeare, leave the rest to fate!"
2 "Ah! How clever, Shakespeare! The Countess was saying, 'How gorgeous! How glowing! I once knew a speech from Julia Sees Her', perhaps his greatest oeuvre of all. Yes! Julia sees Her' is what I like best of that great, great master."
3 The Count said a great many things to me upon the occasion and added, very politely, how much he stood obliged to Shakespeare for making me known to him. 'But, making me known to him', Shakespeare said, 'be – Shakespeare said of great things – he forgot a small part of announcing your name – it puts you under a necessity of doing it yourself.'

'In Defence of the Imagination'

Sir, – Denis Donoghue's carping and edgy review of Helen Gardner's *In Defence of the Imagination* (February 19) fails to acknowledge, among other things, the generosity with which the author refers to some of those she challenges. Frank Ker-mode's *The Genesis of Secrecy*, for example, is called "brilliant and lively"; Harold Bloom is praised for "his passionate love of poetry"; much is said in praise of Peter Brook. Helen Gardner's new book is bold and candid, not mean-spirited.

Donoghue thinks it indecorous of Helen Gardner to have used the Norton Lectures to attack a previous Norton Professor. When such fundamental issues are at stake, however, many will be glad that her frank defence of her discipline over-rides the fear of indecorum.

Donoghue seems irritated that so distinguished and respected a figure should defend the concept of an author, and the idea of a probable or true meaning of a work of art that can in principle "be discovered by the procedures of textual scholarship, historical understanding and practical criticism". Good heavens! Without these there can be no study of literature: no point in editing texts, no point in expounding them, no point in reading them.

Among this week's contributors

JOHN BAYLEY is Warton Professor of English at the University of Oxford. His *Shakespeare and Tragedy* was published last year.

VALENTINE CUNNINGHAM is the author of *Everywhere Spoken Against: Dissent in the Victorian Novel*, 1975.

DAVID DANIELL is a lecturer in English at University College London.

DICK DAVIS's most recent collection of poems is *Seeing the World*, 1980.

KYRIE FITZLYON's most recent book is *Before the Revolution*, 1978.

ROY FOSTER's *Lord Randolph Churchill: A Political Life* was published last year.

ANTHONY GIBBOON's books include *New Rules of Sociological Method*, 1976, and *Studies in Social and Political Theories*, 1977.

VICTORIA GLENNONINNO's biography of Edith Sitwell was published in 1981.

COLIN GREENGLASS is Creative Writing Fellow at North East London Polytechnic.

JULIE HANKEY's theatre-historical edition of *Richard III* was published last year.

J. K. HYDE is Professor of History at the University of Manchester.

KERRI JEFFERY is a lecturer in Politics at Ulster Polytechnic.

JONATHAN KEATES teaches English at the City of London School.

PETER KEATINGE's books include *Into Unknown Britain*, 1977.

PETER KEMP's critical study *H. G. Wells and the Culminating Ape* will be published shortly.

WALTER LAQUEUR's books include *Weimar: A Cultural History 1918-33*, 1976, and *Terrorism*, 1978.

RICHARD LINGLEY is a lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Bradford.

MICHAEL LIPTON's books include *Why People Stay Poor: Urban Bias in World Development*, 1978.

D. M. MACRAE's books include *Central Characters of Conscious Experience*, 1978, and *Motivation, Motor and Sensory Processes of the Brain*, 1980.

Liberté pour rien, as Helen Gardner puts it. Of course there is more to be said. Of course *la nouvelle critique* has contributed something to criticism as well as injured it. But this book will be valued because it recalls literary studies from some of the fruitless freedoms which academic institutions have sometimes licensed, and given it back to the human world.

HOWARD ERSKINE-HILL,
Pembroke College, Cambridge.

Georg Lukács

Sir, – Since one never knows when these things will be dragged up and used in evidence, may I correct George Steiner on the small incident of our personal history which he recalls [Letters, February 19]? The accurate version is as follows: I had heard a broadcast of his, in which he claimed, as I heard it, that all art had to be morbid in its origins, subject matter and approach if it was to be great. I thought this a great overstatement, and when we met on King's Parade said so, adding "What about Jane Austen?" I well remember how Dr Steiner, trembling with kindly rage, patted me on the shoulder and went his way, saying "Cherish your innocence, cherish your innocence" – much the same answer he has given on the present occasion.

I will only add that Tibor Fleissy

DEREK MAHON's most recent collection of poems is *Courtyards in Delft*, 1981.

SARI NUSEIREH is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of Bir Zeit, Israel.

RICHARD OSBOURNE is a contributor to *The Dictionary of Composers*, 1977, and *Opera on Record*, 1979.

MARTIN PAWLEY is the editor of *Building Design*. His *Building for Tomorrow* will be published shortly.

ROGER POOLE is a lecturer in English at the University of Nottingham. His most recent book is *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*, 1978.

RICHARD RATHBONE is a lecturer in the Contemporary History of Africa at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

PETER REBOROVE's most recent collection of poems is *The Weddings in Neither Powers and Other Poems*, 1980.

NESTA ROBERTS's books include *The Poet of France*, 1978.

LOENA SAGE teaches English at the University of East Anglia.

FRANCES SPALDING is the author of *Roger Fry: Art and Life*, 1980.

JONATHAN SUMPTON's books include *Pilgrimage*, 1975, and *The Albigensian Crusade*, 1978.

PAUL TAYLOR is a lecturer in English at Christ Church, Oxford.

ANDREW TOPSFIELD is an Assistant Keeper to the Indian Department at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

JENNIFER UGLOW is the editor of *Essays on Literature and Art by Walter Pater*, 1975.

STANLEY UVA is the London Editor of *The South African Morning Group of Newspapers*.

ANTHONY WAGNER is Clarenceaux King of Arms and Director of the Herald's Museum to the Tower of London.

CHRISTOPHER WINTLE is a lecturer in Music at Goldsmiths College, London.

to the editor

(Letters, February 12) put the case against Lukács with much more authority than I can, and I look forward to seeing how Dr Steiner will deal with his letter.

HUGH BROGAN,
Department of History, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, Essex.

Andrew Marvell

Sir, – Surely the fatal flaw in Eric Korn's light-hearted but diligently researched argument, that A. M., as the signature for the verses he quotes, represents Andrew Marvell, is that Marvell himself wore his hair long. At least that is how he is shown in the engraved plate facing the title page of my first edition of *Miscellaneous Poems*. In that portrait the hair is very long indeed, in fact a clear case of Mullettism.

JOHN LEHMANN,
85 Cornwall Gardens, London SW7.

El Alamein

Sir, – Stephen Harvey's letter (February 26) repeating the canon that Alamein was an unnecessary British victory (it "should have been easily achievable at any time during the previous twelve months") ignores the truth of the matter. If Rommel had but kept Eighth Army pinned down so close to the Nile Delta and Cairo, let alone destroyed it, the whole Allied war effort would have suffered a grievous blow, perhaps beyond repair.

I doubt if any historian will give credit to Mr Harvey for his claim that at Alamein, "Montgomery – and Churchill – surely did demonstrate more flair for public relations than military genius." Battles are won by leadership and command of men, not by PR.

BRIAN MONTGOMERY,
Army and Navy Club, Pall Mall, London SW1.

'For Queen and Country'

Sir, – In his review of Byron Farwell's *For Queen and Country* (January 29), Nicholas Best conveys the flavour of the book and makes it sound worth reading, which it is. However, he neglects to draw attention to certain errors and misconceptions of Mr Farwell's.

It is Farwell's belief that "prior to the First World War the British Army never experienced a serious mutiny among its regulars." In fact, more than one hundred men of the Black Watch mutinied at the end of May 1743 when under orders for Jamaica: three of them were executed. At Balacava it was not Lord

Carligan who charged with a cigar in his mouth, but Lord George Paget. The Royal Scots, the "First of Foot", are indeed one of "the first twenty-five regiments of the line". Rifle regiments – the 60th, the Rifle Brigade, the Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) – did not carry colours. It was not only soldiers in Highland regiments who were called "Jocks", but also those in Lowland battalions. Farwell, much smitten by the glamour of Highland regiments, shares in this misconception and elsewhere, the threesome conviction that "Scottish" and "Highland" are synonymous, interchangeable terms. He says little about the Irish regiments, but does offer it as his view that the pipes were "important" in these regiments during the period of which he writes, which of course they were not. And one is surprised to find him saying next to nothing in his chapter on "Drink" of Irish regiments' addiction to drink and in riot.

Lastly – since one must make an end – Farwell decides William Robertson for expressing the opinion, while CIGS, that tanks were "rather a desperate innovation". Yet they were just that, as John Terraine has shown in his book *The Smoke and the Fire: Myths and Anti-Myths of War, 1861-1945* (1981).

ROBERT COCKBURN,
Department of English, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, New Brunswick.

'The Rise of Opera'

Sir, – I value the praise given to my book *The Rise of Opera* by Jane Glover (February 12) very highly indeed, and would only point out one slight misquotation which slipped in. For, as to those tiny Venetian groups of instruments (you could hardly call them orchestras, if they really were no bigger than they seem), I did not suggest "enlarging them with historical possibilities now", but "within the historical possibilities" – words carefully chosen, since they allow for these possibilities being zero, as Jane Glover's opinion is, although mine is not. But I agree that "it was the nature of opera at this period to concentrate on the solo voice", which I too called "the main purpose of these Venetian operas".

As to that decline of philosophical content which she calls a shift "towards pure entertainment", there were a few exceptions like *La Cenerentola* (1626) or *La Delfina* (1639); and then I suppose French opera took its allegorical values quite seriously with all those portentous discussions at the Académie. My feeling is that some operas, at any rate, can offer value on more than one level at a time.

ROBERT DONINGTON,
Scaynes, Firle, near Lewes, East Sussex.

'Voices of the Great War'

Sir, – Reviewing Peter Vansittart's *Voices from the Great War*, Samuel Hynes (December 18) advances the extraordinary theory that the *ex nihilo* romanticism expressed in the war poems of Rupert Brooke and a few other youthful poets of that generation fairly represents the mood of the millions who, in 1914 and the subsequent years, flocked to the standard from Great Britain and other parts of the British Empire to help in bringing about the defeat of German aggression. This certainly does not correspond with my own memory of my sentiments at the time, of those expressed in conversations I had with men in the trenches, or that I found in the hundreds of soldiers' letters that I was obliged to read before they were despatched.

A delusion widespread among us in the early stages of the war was that fostered by a famous book, *The Great Illusion*, that it was bound to be a short war for economic reasons. But for most of those who fought on our side it was in Hynes's own words just "a task to be done", one that involved an, on the whole, unwelcome interruption of peacetime activities. And if it comes to the question of moral attitudes, was the Kaiser's invasion of neutral Belgium any less a symptom of a nation gone berserk than Hitler's inexorable invasion of Poland in 1939?

T. C. OWTHAN.

Villa Belvedere, 55010 Gragnano, Lucca, Italy.

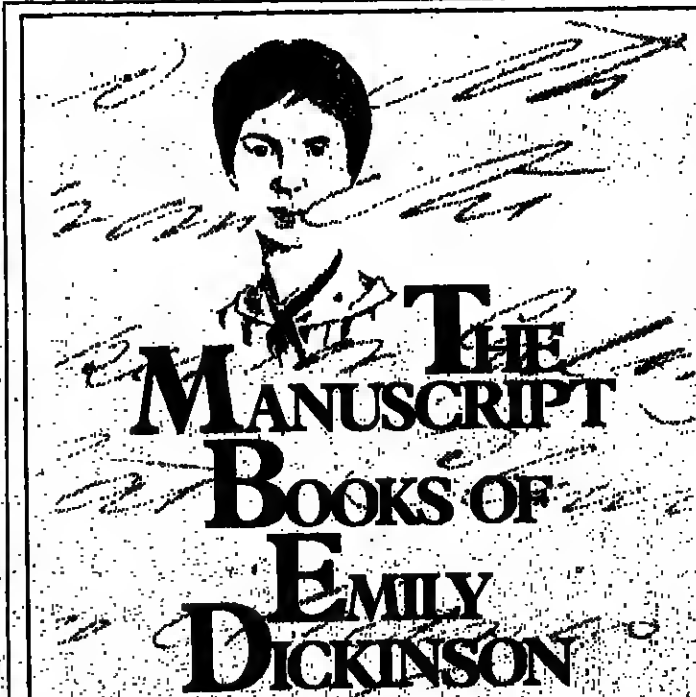
John Donne

Sir, – Peter Beal and Hilton Keliher are to be commended for their demonstration that a Latin epigram has been mistakenly attributed to Donne (Letters, February 12). However, an equally dubious attribution of two much more substantial works to Donne has recently been given an unwarranted currency by the first volume of Dr Beal's *Index of English Literary Manuscripts* (Pt I, p. 261), where it is stated: "two newly discovered sermons are now added to the canon on the basis of clear ascription to 'Doctor Donne' (sermons of Paul) in a volume of sermons at Northampton (DnJ 450-1)". I have had copies of these sermons since 1964 but have never been able to persuade either myself or anyone I consulted that they are likely to be Donne's work. All internal evidence is against the attribution: style, methods, attitudes. It is fortunate that the *Index* records I. A. Shapiro's scepticism about the attribution, for the very qualities listed in the description as possibly giving the sermons special interest because they are so unusual in Donne

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Methuen

to the editor

'Norse Poems'

provide strong reasons for 'supposing them not to be by Donne at all.

The compilers of the *Index* appear to have been unaware that the ascriptions on the title-page of the Finch-Hatton volume are unreliable. The sermons attributed to Donne are immediately followed by one that is wrongly ascribed to "Doctor Curle Bl: of Winchester". This is another "clear ascription" written in exactly the same hand as the two to Donne, but it can be proved false because the sermon is known to be by Brian Duppa: it was published under his name with the title, *Angels Rejoicing for Sinners Repenting*, in 1648.

The *Index* (pp 559-60) gives the date "c. 1632-4" for the Finch-Hatton MS, presumably because some of the authors are listed by clerical dignities and positions they held during that period, but the true date is certainly much later. The first sermon in the volume, attributed this time correctly to Duppa (whose name, however, is accidentally given a satiric form: "Doctor Dupper"), was preached before Charles I at Newport on October 25, 1648, and immediately published with the title, *The Soules Soliloquie* (received by George Thompson on November 14). The Finch-Hatton MS 247 is probably interesting not so much for the extremely dubious attributions to Donne as for indications that it may be a compilation made by Anglicans and Royalists, presumably connected with the Hatton family, for devotional purposes during the period of Puritan rule.

Let us hope that as the vast and much-needed *Index of English Literary Manuscripts* continues with subsequent volumes into later periods such cases as the two sermons in question will be described simply as doubtful or uncertain attributions and not as additions to the canon of the author's work. This will be an increasingly important consideration, since the later seventeenth century abounds in manuscripts with definite contemporary attributions that are definitely false, although in the Restoration era this problem arises more often with the salacious than the sermon literature.

ALLAN PRITCHARD,
University College, University of Toronto, Canada M5S 1A1.

Translating 'Beowulf'

Sir, - As long as M. Mouradian (Letters, January 15) is setting T. A. Shippey (January 1) straight about French translations of *Beowulf*, I would observe that there is a more recent translation than that of Walter Thomas (1919): in 1937 Camille Monnet published a French translation (Turin), based upon the Italian translation of Federico Olivo (1934). Thomas's version, by the way, does not include lines 491-709 of the poem.

STANLEY B. GREENFIELD,
2056 Orchard St, Eugene, Oregon 97403.

'Language of the Underworld'

Sir, - Percy Selwyn speculates (Letters, February 5) on the use of the slang word *pig* for policeman and its possible survival from the days of the Bow-Street runner. The new edition of Hotten's *Slang Dictionary* published in 1887 indicated that the word was used at that time to denote either a plain-clothes officer or an informer, who was also called at the time a nose or a nark. In this century

both accounts may be apocryphal but both Bacon and More's grandson (not his grandson as stated by Korshin) attest independently to tradition at least in the first quarter of the seventeenth century that Sir Thomas made some kind of wry joke as he moved his long beard out of the way of the axe. This is in keeping with Edward Hall's account in his *Chronicle* (1542) that More said to the executioner, "I pray you let me lay my beard over the block lest you should cut it", and with Hall's comment, "thus with a mock he ended his life."

I would not therefore be as confident as Paul J. Korshin that the words are "certainly false."

ERNEST MEHEW,
6 Abercorn Road, Stanmore, Middlesex.

'The Arrogant Connoisseur'

Sir, - It seems rather unjust to call Richard Payne Knight a pseudo-scholar, as does Grevel Lindop (Commentary, February 19), just because he happened to live a long time ago. His *Worship of Priapus*, although reviled by contemporaries for moral reasons, was an intellectual product of its time, a very early example of comparative anthropology. One might as easily say that Priestley and Lavoisier practised pseudo-science because the accumulated knowledge available to a modern scientist was not known to them.

DONALD M. BAILEY,
74 Ferme Park Road, London N8.

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Sir, - Bernard Bergonzi (February 19) is incorrect in suggesting this transition "was not very sympathetic to Surrealism and instead boosted Joyce's *Wake*". In fact, for English and American readers, transition was the best source of information on French surrealism and in its twenty-seven issues there were over sixty contributions by the surrealists, as compared with seventeen excerpts from "Work in Progress". The editor of transition, Eugene Joias, has even signed a surrealist manifesto, defending Charlie Chaplin's *sex life* ("Hands Off Love", transition 6).

PETR SKRABANEK,
Mater Misericordiae Hospital, Sisters of Mercy, Dublin 7, Ireland.

Last Words

Sir, - Paul J. Korshin (Letters, January 29) assumes that the "last words" of Sir Thomas More were an invention of "the more hagiographical lives of More that began to appear in the nineteenth century". In fact these exact words (complete with what he strangely terms the "unusually archaizing of the verb") appear in the anecdote recorded by Francis Bacon in his *Apophthegmes New and Old* (1624) 22, and thus preceded the appearance in print of the similar phrase "Thet had never committed treason" in Cresacre More's biography of c. 1631.

MICHAEL SCHMIDT,
Carcanol New Press, 330 Corn Exchange, Manchester M4 3BG.

Information, please

Celtic Times (1887-88) and *The Gael* (1887-88), weekly newspapers, published Dublin: whereabouts of files; for a biography of the editor of the former. M. Bourke, Room 12, North Block, Government Buildings, Dublin 2, Ireland.

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Robert Gwathmey (b 1903), Southern-born American artist: any reminiscences, letters, writings or other information, especially items concerning his use of racial and other social themes; for a study. Charles K. Piehl, 410 Clark St, Mankato, Minnesota 56001.

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Sterling Hayden, American actor and writer: any interviews, reviews, articles or information from the year 1959 onwards; to assist in a biographical study. Will Chalmers, 30 Cragmarn Road, Portlough, Aberdeen AB1 4QR.

Emily Herman, author of religious books: biographical data, reminiscences, letters, or other material; for a biographical essay. Rosalie Ryan, College of St Catherine, St Paul, Minnesota 55105.

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There was a scent of dust in the air; a thin vestige surviving in the twilight from the golden clouds with which before the House Room fogs had filled the evening sunshine. Light was falling. Beyond the trefails and branched mullions of the windows the towering autumnal leaf was now flat and colourless. All the eastward slope of Spierpoint Down, where the College buildings stood, lay lost in shadow; above and behind, on the high lines of Chandonbury and Spierpoint Ring, the first day of term was gently dying.

In the House Room thirty heads were bent over their books. Few form-masters had set any preparation that day. The Classical Upper Fifth, Charles Ryder's new form, were writing his diary under cover of Hessel's *History*. He looked up from the page to the darkling texts which an in Gothic script around the fire.

"Get on with your work, Ryder," said Aphorpe.

Aphorpe has grazed into being a house-captain in this term, Charles wrote. This is his first evening school. He is being thoroughly officious and on his dignity.

"Can we have the light on, please?"

"All right, Wykham-Blake, put it on." A small boy rose from the under-school table. "Wykham-Blake, I said. There's no need for everyone to move."

A rattle of the chain, a hiss of gas, a brilliant white light over half the room. The other light hung over the new boys' table.

"Put the light on, one of you, whatever your names are."

Six startled little boys looked at Aphorpe and at one another, all began to rise together, all sat down, all looked at Aphorpe in consternation.

"Oh, for heaven's sake."

Aphorpe leaned over their heads and pulled the chain; there was a hiss of gas but no light. "The by-pass is out. Light it, you." He threw a box of matches to one of the new boys who dropped it, picked it up, climbed on the table and looked miserably at the white glass shade, the three hissing mantles and at Aphorpe. He had never seen a lamp of this kind before; at home and at his private school there was electricity. He lit a match and poked it at the lamp, at first without effect; then there was a loud explosion; he stepped back, stumbled and nearly lost his footing among the books and ink-pots, blushed hotly and reigned the bench. The matches remained in his hand and he stared at them, lost in an agony of indecision. How should he dispose of them? No head was raised but everyone in the House Room exulted in the drama. Aphorpe held out his hand invitingly.

"When you have quite finished with my matches perhaps you'll be so kind as to give them back."

In despair the new boy threw them towards the house-captain; in despair he threw slightly wide. Aphorpe made no attempt to catch them, but watched them curiously as they fell to the floor. "How very extraordinary," he said. The new boy looked at the match-box. Aphorpe looked at the new boy. "Would it be troubling you too much if I asked you to give me my matches?" he said.

The new boy rose to his feet, walked the few steps, picked up the match-box and gave it to the house-captain, with the ghostly semblance of a smile.

"Extraordinary crew of new men we have this term," said Aphorpe. "They seem to be entirely half-witted. Has anyone been turned out to look after this man?"

"Please, I have," said Wykham-Blake.

A grave responsibility for one so young. Try and convey to his limited intelligence that it may prove a painful practice here to throw matches

bxes about in evening school, and inugh at house officials. By the way, is that a work-book you're reading?"

"Oh, yes, Aphorpe." Wykham-Blake raised a face of cherubine innocence and presented the back of the *Golden Treasury*.

"Who's it for?"

"Mr Graves. We're to learn any poem we like."

"Milton-on-his-blindness."

"How may one ask, did that take your fancy?"

"I learned it once before," said Wykham-Blake and Aphorpe laughed indulgently.

"Young blighter," he said.

Charles wrote: Now he is snooping round seeing what books men are reading. It would be typical if he got someone beaten his first evening school. The day before yesterday this time I was in my dinner-jacket just sitting out for dinner at the d'Almeida with Aunt Philippa before going to the Choice at Wyndham's. Quantum mutatus ab illo flectore. Now I am absorbed in the trivial round of House politics. Graves has played hell with the house-captain.

The only consolation was seeing the woe on Wheatley's face when the locker list went up. He thought he was a cert for the Settle this term. Bad luck on Tamplin though. I never expected to get on but I ought by all rights to have been above O'Malley. What a tick Graves is. It all comes of this rotten system of switching round house-tutors. We ought to have the best of Heads instead of how they try out ticks like Graves on us before giving them a house. If only we still had Frank.

Charles's handwriting had lately begun to develop certain ornamental features - Greek Es and flourished crossings. He wrote with conscious style. Whenever Aphorpe came past he would turn a page in the history book, hesitate and then write as though making a note from the text. Two hands of the clock crept on to half past seven when the porter's handbell began to sound in the cloisters on the far side of Lower Quad. This was the signal of release. Throughout the House Room heads were raised, pages blotted, books closed, fountain-pens screwed up.

"Get on with your work," said Aphorpe. "I haven't said anything about moving." The porter and his bell passed up the arch by the library steps, were barely audible in the

Anteroom after we ragged Fletcher,

Charles Ryder's Schooldays

By Evelyn Waugh

CHAPTER ONE: RYDER BY GASLIGHT

Last August one of my colleagues, examining the Evelyn Waugh file for 1970 in a search for evidence bearing on a contractual negotiation with his publishers Eyre Methuen, came upon a thirty-four-page typescript entitled *Charles Ryder's Schooldays*. There was nothing to show why this piece had been put in the 1970 file. It was a good carbon bearing the stamp of Alex McLachlan, literary type-copying specialist of St Leonards-on-Sea, described by Professor Robert Murray Davis in his book *Evelyn Waugh, Writer as Waugh's long-suffering typist*. It was apparently intended for submission, since it bore on the title page the label of A. D. Peters, Literary Agent.

The manuscript could be read as a self-contained short story about the young Charles Ryder at public school. But the Evelyn Waugh diaries for 1945 suggest a different history. On September 25, 1945, he wrote: "Yesterday I read my *Lancing* diaries through with unimpaired shan." Then on October 2 he wrote: "... my life seems more placid and happy than ever. I have begun a novel of school life in 1919 - as unoriginal a theme as could be found." On October 28: "The last three weeks have been happy and uneventful: Laura cooking better, wine lasting out, weather splendid. I have written more of the school story. ... This is the last mention of the enterprise in the diary entries, and there is no hint in the 1945 A. D. Peters file, now at the Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas, of what passed between Waugh and A. D. Peters on the subject.

I sought help from two authorities. Colonel Don MacNamra, late of the US Marine Corps and now writing a thesis at the University of Texas on the relationship between Waugh and A. D. Peters, drew a blank in the 1945 files, but was able to report that the original manuscript of the piece was conveyed to Texas with the rest of the Waugh material. I asked Donal Gallagher of the University of North Queensland, who is in London editing *The Complete Essays and Articles of Evelyn Waugh* for publication by Eyre Methuen in 1983, what he made of it. He has a photo-copy of the original manuscript and pointed out a large number of literals (which have been corrected for printing here), at variance with Waugh's correct spellings in manuscript, which suggest that Waugh may have been as long-suffering in his relationship with McLachlan as the latter was with him. Gallagher points out that in many respects Charles Ryder's *Schooldays* picks up detail and incident from the *Lancing* diaries. He makes two further observations. First, that the manuscript of *Schooldays* contains a considerable amount of material about Charles Ryder's early life and family background which does not appear in the published version of the novel. Second, he would expect Waugh to want to emphasize clearly something that does not come out in the published version of *Schooldays*: the contrast between the family backgrounds of Sebastian and Ryder. Perhaps this helps to explain Waugh's settling down, in an apparently happy and relaxed frame of mind, to embark on a novel on this subject.

What happened then has to be conjecture. We have no evidence that the piece was submitted to any magazine, and it would be surprising if any ensuing rejection letters had not been kept in the Waugh file. Perhaps Waugh and Peters agreed that the time wasn't ripe for submitting this fragment; perhaps Peters, after reading it, talked Waugh out of proceeding with the novel. My guess is that the typescript went into Peters's desk drawer and that when he was going through his desk in 1970 he found it and put it in the current file. Maybe publication here will flush out an editor who wrote a careful rejection letter in the autumn of 1945.

Michael Sissons

Upper Quad, grew

in pencil, then tensely, with breath held, making the outline with a mopping-pen; then, when it was dry - how often, in his impatience, he had ruined his work by attempting this too soon - rubbing away the pencil lines. Finally he got out his water colours and his red sable brushes. At heart he knew he was going too fast - a monk would take a week over a single letter - but he worked with intensity and in less than two hours the initial with its pendant, convoluted border was finished. Then, as he put away his brushes, the exclamation left him, it was no good; it was hotched; the ink nodule varied in thickness, the curves seemed to feel their way cautiously where they should have been bold; in places the colour overran the line and everywhere in contrast to the opaque lithographic ink it was watery and transparent. It was no good.

Despondently Charles shut his drawing book and put his things together. Outside the Drawing School, steps led down to the Upper Quad past the doors of Brent's House - Frank's. Here he met Mercer.

"Hullo, been painting?"

"Yes, if you can call it that."

"Let me see."

"No."

"Please."

"It's absolutely beastly. I hate it. I tell you. I'd have torn it up if I wasn't going to keep it as a humiliation in look at in case I ever begin to feel I know anything about art."

"You're always dissatisfied. Ryder. It's the mark of a true artist, I suppose."

"If I was an artist I shouldn't do things I'd be dissatisfied with. Here, look at it. If you must."

Mercer gazed at the open page. "What don't you like about it?"

"The whole thing's nauseating."

"I suppose it is a bit ornate."

"There, my dear Mercer, with your usual unerring discernment you have hit upon the one quality that is at all tolerable."

"Oh, sorry. Anyway, I think the whole thing absolutely first-class."

"Do you, Mercer. I'm greatly encouraged."

"You know you're a frightfully difficult man. I don't know why I like you."

"I know why I like you. Because you are so extremely easy."

"Coming to the library?"

"I suppose so."

When the library was open a pre-emptive strike was entered in a ledger the books which boys took out. Charles, as usual made his way to the case where the Art books were kept but before he had time to settle down, as he liked to do, he was accosted by Curtis-Dunne, the old new boy of last term. In Brent's. "Don't you think it's splendid?" he said, "that on one of the few days of the week when we have the chance to use the library, we should have to kick our heels waiting until some semi-literate prefect chooses to turn up and take his time? I've taken the matter up with the good Frank."

"Oh, and what did he say to that?"

"We're trying to work out a scheme by which library privileges can be extended to those who seriously want them, people like you and me and I suppose the good Mercer."

"I forget for the moment what form you are in."

"Modern Upper. Please, don't think from that I am a scientist. It's simply that in the Navy we had to drop Classics. My interests are entirely literary and political. And of course hedonistic."

"Oh."

"Hedonistic above all. By the way I've been looking through the political and economic section. It's very quaintly chosen, with glaring lacunae. I've just listed three pages in the Suggestive Book. I thought perhaps you'd care to append your signature."

"No, thanks. It's not usual for people without library privileges to write in the Suggestive Book. Besides, I've no interest in economics."

"I've also written a suggestion about extending the library privileges. Frank needs something to work on, that he can put before the committee."

He brought the book to the Art bay; Charles read "That since seniority is no indication of literary taste the system of library privileges be revised to provide facilities for those genuinely desirous of using them to advantage."

"Nearly put, I think," said Curtis-Dunne.

"You'll be thought frantically above yourself, writing this."

"It is already generally recognized that I am above myself, but I want other signatures."

Charles hesitated. To gain time he said, "I say, what on earth have you got on your feet? Aren't those house shoes?"

Curtis-Dunne pointed a toe shod in shabby, soft black leather; a laced shoe without a toe-cap. In surface like the cover of a well-worn Bible. "Ah, you have observed my labour-saving device. I wear them night and morning. They are a constant perplexity to those in authority. When questioned, as happened two or three times a week during my first term, I say they are a novel pattern which my father, on account of extreme poverty, has asked me to wear out. That embarrasses them. But I am sure you do not share these middle-class prejudices. Dear boy, your name, please, to this subversive manifesto."

Still Charles hesitated. The suggestion outraged Spierpoint taste in all particulars. Whatever intrigues, blandishments and self-advertisements were employed by the ambitious at Spierpoint were always elaborately disguised. Self-effacement and depreciation were the rule. To put oneself explicitly forward for preferment was literally not done. Moreover, the ed came from a boy who was not only in another house and immeasurably Charles's inferior, but also a notorious eccentric. A ten base Charles would have rejected the proposal with horror, but today and all this term he was aware of a new voice in his inner counsels, a detached, critical Hyde who intruded his presence more and more often on the conventional, intolerant, sub-human, wholly respectable Dr Jekyll; a voice, as it were, from a more civilized age, as from the chimney corner in mid-Victorian times there used to break sometimes the sardonic laughter of grandmothers, relics of Regency, a clear, outrageous, entirely self-assured disturber among the high and muddled thoughts of her whiskered descendants.

"Frank's all for the suggestion, you know," said Curtis-Dunne. "He says the initiative must come from us. He can't go pushing reforms which he'll be told nobody really wants. He wants a concrete proposal to put before the library committee."

That silenced Jekyll. Charles signed.

"Now," said Curtis-Dunne, "there should be little difficulty with the Mercer. He said he'd sign if you would."

By lunch-time there were twenty-three signatures, including the pre-emptive charge.

"We have this day lit a candle," said Curtis-Dunne.

There was some comment around Charles in Hell about his conduct in the library.

"I know he's awful," said Charles, "but he happens to amuse me."

"They all think he's barmy in Brent's."

"Frank doesn't. And anyway I call that a recommendation. As a matter of fact, he's one of the most intelligent men I ever met. If he'd come at the proper time he'd probably be senior to all of us."

"Support came unexpectedly from Wheatley. I happen to know the Head took him in as a special favour to his father. He's Sir Samson Curtis-Dunne's son, the Member for the division. They've got a big place near Sleaford. I wouldn't at all mind having in days shooting there next Venman day."

On Sunday afternoons, for two hours, the House Room was out of bounds to all except the Settlers in their black coats and with straw hats under their arms the school scattered

over the countryside in groups, pairs and occasional disconsolate single figures, for "twists". All human habitations were barred: the choice lay between the open down behind Spierpoint Ring and the single country road to the isolated Norman church of St Botolph. Tamplin and Charles usually walked together.

"How I hate Sunday afternoons," said Charles.

"We might get some blackberries."

But at the door of the house they were stopped by Mr Graves.

"Hullo, you two," he said, "would you like to make yourselves useful? My press has arrived. I thought you might help put it together." He led them into his room, where half-opened crates filled most of the floor. "It was all in one piece when I bought it. All I've got to go on is this."

He showed them a wood-cut in an old book. "They didn't change much from Caxton's day until the steam presses came in. This one is about a hundred years old."

"Damned sweet," muttered Tamplin.

"And here, young Ryder, is the 'movable type' you deplore so much."

"What sort of type is it, sir?"

"We'll have to find out. I bought the whole thing in one lot from a village stonemason."

They took out letters at random, set them, and took an impression by pressing them, inked, on a sheet of writing paper. Mr Graves had an all of typefaces.

"They all look the same to me," said Tamplin.

In spite of his prejudice, Charles was interested. "I've got it, I think, sir; Baskerville."

"No. Look at the serifs. How about Caslon Old Style?"

At last it was identified. Then Charles found a box full of ornamental initials, menu headings of decanters and dessert, foxes' heads and running hounds for sporting announcements, ecclesiastical devices and monograms, crowns, Odd Fellows' arms, the wood-cut of a prize bull, decorative bands, the splendid jumble of a century of English job-printing.

"I say, sir, what was. You could do all sorts of things with these."

"We will, Charles."

Tamplin looked at the amateurs with disgust. "I say, sir, I've just remembered something I must do. Do you mind awfully if I don't stay?"

"Run along, old Tamplin." When he had gone, Mr Graves said, "I'm sorry Tamplin doesn't like me."

"Why can't he not let things pass?" thought Charles. "Why does he always have to comment on everything?"

"You don't like me either, Charles. But you like the press."

"Yes," said Charles, "I like the press."

The type was tied up in little bags. They poured it out, each bagful in the tray provided for it in the worn oak tray.

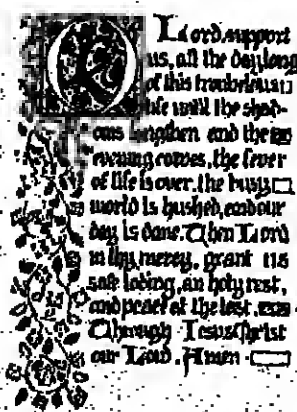
"Now for the press. This looks like the base."

It took them two hours to rebuild. When at last it was assembled, it looked small, far too small for the number and size of the cases in which it had travelled. The main cast-iron supports terminated in brass Corinthian capitals and the summit was embellished with a brass-upon-bearing engraved date 1824. The common labour, the problems and discoveries, of erection had drawn the two together; now they surveyed its completion in common pride. Tamplin was forgotten.

"It's a lovely thing, sir. Could you print a book on it?"

"It would take time to thank you very much for your suggestion. And now Mr Graves looked at his watch, as through some grave misarrangement of justice, you are not on the Settle, I expect you have no engagement for tea. See what you can find in the locker."

The mention of the Settle disturbed their intimacy. Mr Graves repeated the mistake a few minutes later when they had boiled the kettle and were making toast on the gas



Examples of Evelyn Waugh's script in 1919 (left) and 1920, before and after his tuition by Francis Crease. Reproduced in *A Little Learning*, Waugh's account of his early life first published in 1964.

ring. "So at this moment Desmond O'Malley is sitting down to his first Settle tea. I hope he's enjoying it. I don't think somehow he is enjoying this room very much so far." Charles said nothing. "Do you know, he came to me two days ago and asked me to resign from it? He said that if I didn't let him he would do something that would make me degrade him. He's an odd boy, Desmond. It was an odd request."

"I don't suppose he'd want me to know about it."

"Of course he wouldn't. Do you know why I'm telling you? Do you?"

"No, sir."

"I think you could make all the difference to him, whether his life is tolerable or not. I gather all you little beasts in the Upper Dormitory have been giving him hell."

"If we have, it's because he asked for it."

"I dare say, but don't you think it rather sad that in life there are so many different things different people are asking for, and the only people who get what they ask for are the Desmond O'Malleys?"

At that moment, beyond the box-room, the Settle tea had reached its second stage; sufficed with crumpets, five or six each, they were starting on the eclairs and cream-slices. There was still a warm, soggy pile of crumpets left uneaten and according to custom O'Malley, as junior man, was deputed to hand them round the House Room.

Wheatley was supercilious. "What is that, O'Malley? Crumpets? How very kind of you, but I am afraid I never eat them. My digestion, you know."

Tamplin was comic. "My figure, you know," he said.

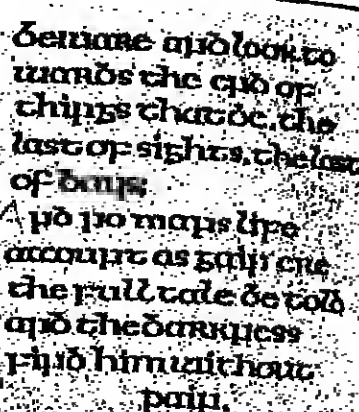
Jorkins was rude. "No, thanks. They look stale."

There was loud laughter among the third-year men and some of the more precocious Juniors. In strict order of seniority, O'Malley travelled from boy to boy, rebuffed, refused. Only the fags watched, first in wonder that anyone should refuse crumpets on a cold afternoon, later with brightening expectancy as the full plate came nearer to them.

"I say, thanks awfully, O'Malley." They soon went at the under-school table and O'Malley returned to his chair before the empty grate, where he sat until chapel silently eating confectionery.

"You see," said Mr Graves, "the beastlier you are to O'Malley, the beastlier he'll become. People are like that."

"Sunday, Sept. 28th. Chorn. Two or three fairs otherwise uneventful. Tried to do the initial and border for 'The Bells of Heaven' but made a mess of it. Afterwards talked to Curtis-Dunne in the library. He intrigues me. With Frank's approval we are agitating for library privileges. I don't suppose anything will come of it except that everyone will say we are above ourselves. After luncheon, Tamplin and I were going for a walk when Graves called us in and made us help put up his printing press. Tamplin escaped. Does not try to get things out of me about ragging Dirty Desmond but without success. In the evening we had another rag. Tamplin, Wheatley, Jorkins and I hurried up to the dormitory as soon as the



Examples of Evelyn Waugh's script in 1919 (left) and 1920, before and after his tuition by Francis Crease. Reproduced in *A Little Learning*, Waugh's account of his early life first published in 1964.

bell went and said our prayers before Dirty D. arrived. Then when he said 'Say your dibs' we just sat on our beds. He looked frightfully bored and said 'Must I repeat my instructions?' As the other idea were praying we said nothing. Then he said, 'I give you one more chance to say your dibs. If you don't I'll report you.' We said nothing. He said that if I didn't let him he would do something that would make me degrade him. He's an odd boy, Desmond. It was an odd request."

"I don't suppose he'd want me to know about it."

"Of course he wouldn't. Do you know why I'm telling you? Do you?"

"No, sir."

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SOCIAL HISTORY

Places at table

By Anthony Wagner

G. D. SQUIBB:
Precedence in England and Wales
Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, £12.50.
0 19 825389 3

On the foggy borderland between legal history and heraldry in the broadest sense lie certain topics of which scholars have been somewhat depressed altogether without reason. This is hinted at here by G. D. Squibb at the end of his appendix on "The Antiquity" of Barons by Writ of Summons, when he concludes "that Round was right when he described modern peerage law as a muddle, and the adverse criticism of lawyers who are not historians by historians who are not lawyers has been fully justified."

Mr Squibb, Horace Round's eventual successor as Honorary Historical Adviser in Peerage Cases, is both lawyer and historian and has consistently avoided the polemical approach which makes much of Round's work amusing but often at the same time misleading. For Round's venom he substitutes dry clarity and by this, and by his total mastery of scattered documents and details of potentially infuriating complexity, he presents a final pattern of disarming simplicity and apparent logic.

He did this first in 1939 with *The High Court of Chivalry*, where he brought a previously unknown subject-matter into such blinding light and sharp focus as to encourage the belief that no one else need ever work again through the mass of unpublished documents which he quoted. Now he has done the same for *Precedence*, but in a subtly different way. Whereas most of us knew that we knew nothing of the Peerage of Chivalry, many of us did think that we knew something about precedence. The pecking order, after all, is a subject of general concern in mankind. To have it firmly settled and accepted is thus indeed a major contribution to the reduction of civil strife. But is it not left settled for

England and Wales, not to mention Scotland, in something called the table of precedence?

First, we must leave Scotland out of it. English law is not Scots law and "an English lawyer must acknowledge himself to be unqualified to write on Scots law". Second, "There is no such thing as the table of precedence". There are tables of precedence compiled for different purposes at different dates, some of them printed in modern peerage books and the like, but none is official and they disagree with one another. There are indeed clear indications that the order of different ranks was a matter of law before the Conquest and some conclusions can be drawn from the order of witnesses to documents both before and after 1066. However, the first known tabulation of "The Order of all Estates of Nobles and Gentry in England" dates from 1399 and was perhaps drawn up for the coronation of Henry IV. Like later lists of the same kind, it seems in no sense to have been an enactment, but simply a codification of current practice. One such order, however, drawn up by the Lord Chamberlain for a dinner given to the French and Venetian ambassadors in 1520, was so highly esteemed that the Lords Commissioners for the Office of Earl Marshal made it the foundation of an ordinance which they drafted for Queen Elizabeth in 1595, and this, Squibb tells us, formed the basis of the present law of precedence. Upon this basis the subsequent structure has been built "by the conformation upon persons and classes of persons of special precedence defined in relation to existing precedence as being above or below some other person or class of person."

Possibly the most striking enactment of this kind was the House of Lords Precedence Act, 1539, which defined precedence by reference to the order of seating in the Privy Chamber, its effect (with that of subsequent events) on the relative precedence of the Earl Marshal and the Lord Great Chamberlain makes Squibb, who is a master of abbreviation, three whole paragraphs to explain. Its theory and practice have now been definitely analysed.

Her personal life was less successful. "Love was the climate of her soul", writes her biographer, infected by his subject's style. She loved Reginald Brett, later Lord Esher, who gave her friendship but not the romance she wanted. This was supplied by Percy Desmond FitzGerald, an archetypally charming Irishman, the Hussars, of which the Duke died a warrior. After the Duke died she married him, pointlessly and unsuccessfully. She married a third time at fifty-two, equally disastrously. George Ernest Haves, also a soldier, was a homosexual and the alliance petered out after a few years. The experience produced the most vivid place of writing from Millcent that this book affords - a description of a bottle in Paris: "All down the sides of the room were large palms cut from painted cardboard. On each palm perched a monster painted parrot - one each parrot sat a boy..."

Before he died, her husband the Duke, made parody by the introduction of death duties and Lloyd George's 1909 budget, had got rid of both Trentham and Stafford House. His downfall ended her days in France, in circumstances that were flattened but not strait. She had a series of apartments in Paris and houses in the French countryside, and was looked after by an Italian chef, a French chauffeur, and her devoted Scottish personal maid. It is puzzling to be exhorted to admire the particular "courage" of women like her, as if it takes even greater courage to bear old age and illness if you have been beautiful, wealthy and famous than if you have not. It may be true - since the pious sentiment is so established a convention in biographies of women such as Millcent. But I have yet to understand why.

Love and charity

By Victoria Glendinning

DENIS STUART:
Dear Duchess
Millcent, Duchess of Sutherland,
1867-1955
21pp. Victor Gollancz. £10.95.
0 255 03020 8

Denis Stuart, a historian of the Porters, admits that he "fell in love" with the idea of Millcent, Duchess of Sutherland, in the course of his researches into the history of Stoke-on-Trent. The result of this coup de foudre is an unsearching biography that makes his "Dear Duchess" seem the blueprint for the now mythical Edwardian aristocrat - the exemplar of a type endlessly encountered in biographies and memoirs, a composite portrait by Sargeant, a lay figure from novels such as *The Edwardians*, in which, indeed, she figures. But Mr Stuart is not world-weary. Like his Duchess writing about her first sight of the Taj Mahal, he seems delighted that "anything so divinely beautiful should be found upon this sinful earth."

She had still higher aspirations. One of them was literature - she wrote bad novels, bad poetry and bad plays. She worked tirelessly for her chosen charities - some of them with peculiarly tentative names, such as the Scheme for the Encouragement of the Kindly Treatment of Animals, others more significant. She fought to abolish the use of lead in Staffordshire pottery manufacture, incurring the fury of the employers, who nicknamed her "Meddlesome Millie".

Arnold Bennett portrayed her as the go-gooding Countess of Chells in his *Five Towns* novels. She revitalized the Scottish tweed industry, established training in crafts and trades for crippled children, and set up a technical school in Glasgow, the village near Dunrobin. Like many energetic women of her class she found her métier during the First

World War, running hospitals in France.

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The arrogant connoisseur

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Duse on tour

the diary of Guido Noccioli

The way he tells them

By Roger Poole

JOSEPH H. SMITH (Editor):
Kierkegaard's Truth: The Disclosure of the Self
438pp. Yale University Press. £25.55.
0 300 02621 8

MARK C. TAYLOR:
Journeys to Selfhood
Hegel and Kierkegaard
289pp. University of California Press. £13.50 (paperback). £5.25.
0 520 04176 3

Kierkegaard studies are growing up. *Kierkegaard's Truth: The Disclosure of the Self* is remarkably better than anything that could have been put together ten years ago. This may be due partly to the recent renaissance in Hegel studies, and partly to the new kind of literary expertise devoted to the rhetoric of the text: it may also well be due to the new vigour in the study of Freud since Jacques Lacan. Anyway, it is all grist to Kierkegaard's mill.

One of the reasons why the new Yale volume is so varied and so good is because when James Collins calls a third generation of scholarship "lies behind many of the essays. The early pioneering work of Lowrie, Swenson and Dru was succeeded by a decade of studies on specific topics, but the third generation, according to Collins, "increasingly follows the example of Unumvno by learning Danish." The result is a remarkable gain in competence and precision. Kierkegaard uses every trick in the writer's box, and Collins observes that "scholars today feel that they are on the periphery if they cannot consult him in the original." If this sounds exaggerated, it should be noted that the greater part of the essays in the volume are in fact written by scholars with the Danish text in front of them. Those of whom this is not true, like Paul Ricoeur, now appear at a considerable disadvantage.

Paul Holmer and Paul Armstrong both have strong places on the in-escapable demand that Kierkegaard's work makes on the reader: it is not to be eluded by technicalities, nor is it there to instruct. Harold Durfee's important essay insists upon the necessarily subjective aspect of knowing:

It is time for philosophers to make clear, especially in an age crying for clarity, the existential decisions that may underlie the very foundations of their theoretical constructions. By no means am I suggesting that there is any inappropriateness in such decisions. Quite the contrary: it does seem, however, highly inappropriate to have them posited and affirmed by implication, but seldom if ever acknowledged and to continue to pretend that they do not exist. This is the crucial metaphysical impact of the Kierkegaardian insights and the question he poses for contemporary philosophy.

Since Kierkegaard is often written off as some kind of epistemological "weir", this needs pondering. Durfee also makes the point, long overdue but happily stated at last, that there is a "great tension" in what he calls the "merger" between Husserlian and existential phenomenology.

William Kierkegaard starts in on the theme, picked up by W. V. Quine, and Michael Thompson later in the volume, of what relationship one can desire between Kierkegaard and Freud, or psychoanalysis more generally. It is evident from these essays that no happy relationship has yet been worked out between the "decisional" texts of Kierkegaard and the apparently analytic texts of Freud. The essays on psychoanalysis are the least successful in the book, and this again is an area where the experts keep tripping over their own feet. If one is going to tackle Kierkegaard with Freudian instruments, one must definitely work at the level of the "joking" text.

It is good therefore to find a writer like Bruce Kirmmse going through *The Sickness into Death*

with a geiger-counter, picking up puns, jokes, and double-entendres, as well as that uniquely Kierkegaardian device, the line that is apparently meant to be helpful but in fact is there to throw a methodical reading off the track completely. Kirmmse is very good at distinguishing the "oscillating" use of key terms, though I doubt in fact whether "the three basic forms of the sickness into death" correspond to distinct social types. But one can forgive anything for a footnote like the one on page 177, on the origin of the word "Spilshunger" which states "Spilshunger itself is utilised in the German Spiesbürger, and originally meant a free citizen (Bürger) wealthy enough to be allowed to be a part of the militia for the defence of the city and as such permitted to carry a spear (Spieß). Thus a Spilshunger was a respectable, spear-carrying member of the middle class not come in time to be a term of contempt."

The outstanding essay in this volume is Louis H. Mackey's "A Ramble in the Afternoon: Kierkegaard's Discourse of the Other." This is because here "third generation scholarship" has been brought to bear explicitly on the textual strategies of Kierkegaard's works as a whole. Mackey makes canny use of Derrida's concepts of "deferment" and "ensure" and he has many pithy one-liners which collocate a multitude of things; for instance: "An indirect (ironic) communication is a system of signifiers that obviates reference" - a distinctly post-Derridian remark. "The language of the *Fragment* proceeds as any hierarchizing of signs and referent." "As an indirect communication the *Fragment* is a system of signs that systematically severs its bonds with any referent that it might be supposed to designate. The meaning of the text is therefore to be sought exclusively in the interrelations of the signifiers themselves, their reflection upon each other, and not in their allusion to any transcendent thought or thing."

The rest of the collection, after Mackey, is rather a let-down, partly because the awareness of the text is less, and partly because the essays are in some way reductive. I would object to Vincent McCarthy, for instance, that there are more than "four modes" in Kierkegaard, and that for ones he treats are not "three" for two sorts of reasons that Mackey advances. Nevertheless, McCarthy's conclusions are trenchant, "placing" Mark Taylor's dilemma expertly. Mackey's attempt to "refashion" Kierkegaard's categories "by analogy to the demands and concerns of a psychoanalytical enquiry" makes one uneasy about the concept of analogy. Ricoeur, represented here by two texts of 1963 (very definitely not "third-generation scholarship") is visible not to make sense of Kierkegaard at all except by straining him through Hegel and Heidegger. Taylor offers what is really a resumé of his recent book (of which more in a moment), and seems to find no way of dealing with the radical literary allusion of Kierkegaard except in terms of a "pedagogic" concern which he has asserted to have shared with Hegel. Michael Theunissen, losing the book, does not really drag Kierkegaard clear of the tropes of psychology, even if, refreshingly enough, his psychology is existential. None of these approaches is productive. It is Mackey's book we have to follow; we have to let Kierkegaard talk in his own voice, observe him writing his outrageous paradoxes into his own conflicting and "deferred" rhetoric, and face him for the appalling *littérateur* in philosophy that he actually is.

It is this unfortunate feature of Kierkegaard's thought which makes Taylor's play in his recent book *Journeys to Selfhood* so difficult of fulfilment. The book is learned and intelligent, and conducted from the Danish text. But Taylor's effort to make Kierkegaard and Hegel so equal in the struggle for attention from what he calls (using Kierkegaard's own term) "spiritlessness" in-

volves him in a degree of rationalist salvation towards which Kierkegaard reacts badly. Kierkegaard does not want to be read through the dark glass of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and he largely refuses every claim of Hegel's thought.

Since Josiah Royce, it has been a commonplace to refer to Hegel's *Phenomenology* as a *Bildungsroman* but Taylor is the first (if one excepts, interestingly enough, Mackey's book of 1972, *Kierkegaard: A Kind of Poet*) to advance Kierkegaard's early aesthetic works as a comparable act of continuous self-education. The master of their thought, it is implied, was Schiller, though my impression is that Schiller was not a great influence on Kierkegaard, however great an influence he may have been on Hegel. Much of the argument here is, I feel, more of a happy assonance of ideas than an actual historical phenomenon, and much of the inspiration comes from M. H. Abrams's *Natural Supernaturalism*, a source which Taylor often acknowledges.

Taylor's effort in the second half of his book to make Kierkegaard's and Hegel's "structures of spirit" in some degree assimilable to each other, at least in terms of their "pedagogic" intention, is not so much mistaken, then, as necessarily unsuccessful, given that what Hegel means by "spirit" and what Kierkegaard means by it are incompatible. True, Taylor knows this as well as anyone, and insists on it here and there in the text as well as in many footnotes, but he seems determined not to draw the moral, which is that the meaning of the term "spiritlessness" in the two writers is as distinct as chalk from cheese.

Kierkegaard remains a literalist, working in self-subverting rhetorics towards establishing a meaning of "spiritlessness" which is deliberately provocative and to some extent unpalatable. Nevertheless, he appears to be in some basic way the more modern of the two thinkers. By his side, Hegel appears textually naïve - he never questions the paragraph

format. For Kierkegaard the writer, this means that Hegel had not started on freeing himself from "spiritlessness".

Taylor has written a book full of instruction and insight, dedicated at a high level to making careful and accurate distinctions in precise philosophical terms. As a study of the aesthetic aims of Schiller and Hegel it is admirable. With regard to Kierkegaard, though, one's judgment has to be more reserved. Taylor writes interestingly and well when he is showing how Kierkegaard rejected Hegel. Perhaps the best pages in his book are those where he shows how much courage Kierkegaard derived from Sørensen's 1838 monograph on Hegel, in which Sørensen, dismayed and appalled, felt constrained to reaffirm the Aristotelian law of contradiction in the face of the all-consuming Hegelian rhetoric of philosophical oxymoron. And, after all, there is very little evidence to suggest that Kierkegaard ever engaged seriously with Hegel in the original German.

I feel uneasy about the fact, too, that Taylor has adopted a Hegelian rhetoric to describe Kierkegaard's thought, which leads on many occasions to an actual falsification of what Kierkegaard said. For instance: "Hegel, of course, does not reject the principle of contradiction. As we have seen it is essential to his entire philosophical and theological position. It will become evident, however, that Hegel and Kierkegaard interpret contradiction differently." Well, if this is true at all, page 164 is rather late to say it, and Taylor's use of the future tense is ominous. This may not be a strictly philosophical matter at all, but one of rhetoric. Hegel uses language as if the principle of contradiction didn't apply, and Taylor follows Hegel's lead. But for Kierkegaard, following Sørensen, the principle of contradiction did apply, and his language labours to reflect this. Taylor very often does not read Kierkegaard, but only in-

tracts from him. His Kierkegaard is Hegel's property.

There has to be a choice in the end. Taylor puts off choosing as long as he can, but in his "Prefatory Conclusion" he opts for socializing Kierkegaard's nation of reality. Kierkegaard's nation of reality is dialectical vision offers a more subtle, more comprehensive nature of the self and the dynamics of personal and corporate history. "We are social creatures," says Taylor, "we cannot do to be the individual in Kierkegaard's sense. 'In our time,' he asks: 'How can we restore the unity of man?'" I wish Taylor had analysed the meaning of every word in that question before he began his book. Is there a unity of man to be restored? And if so, is Hegel's more useful than Kierkegaard's? Taylor actually furnishes this on his very last page: "Unity within pluralism: being within becoming; continuity within change; hence within but identity within difference; the union of union and non-union - reconciliation in the midst of estrangement. The end of the journey to selfhood. All these abstractions are unthinkable. They are Hegelian oxymorons. The world remains stubbornly and sourly what it was before Taylor took up his pen. Choice is still necessary. Kierkegaard still says: 'In the face of Taylor's rhetoric. Choose!'"

Thus we are led back, through Taylor's large hook, to Louis Mackey's suggestion. The proper way to read Kierkegaard is not for what he says, but for how he says it. The neostitutes, looking at his text in a quite different way from the way we read Hegel and Marx, who have absolutely in paragonisms. The parallel thinker to Hegel is not of course Nietzsche. Doubtless a fourth generation of criticism will draw the potential of that fact, and about Kierkegaard the complicity, the veridical, of reading him as a great writer, his text-subverter, extra-textary, and Nietzsche's precursor.

past forty years. What is new, and impressive, is the scale of the implications now possible, which dramatizes the need to come in terms with any lurking philosophical consequences of their success.

For this task Professor Boden is eager and well-armed. "The computational metaphor," she argues, "is not intrinsically dehumanizing, as is so commonly feared by people who value human subjectivity and creativity. On the contrary, it offers us for the first time a theoretical account of these human characteristics which highlights instead of obscuring their awe-inspiring subtlety and complexity. . . . Following lines by now well-worn, though still missed by reductionist materialists, she spells out clearly the differences between explaining and 'explaining away', and hits for six the notion that a mechanistic account of brain function would reduce human decisions to mere 'epiphenomena', powerless to influence the course of our actions. Something as dull as a computer's behaviour, as dull as can be said with equal propriety to be determined both by the program embodied in it and by the physical constraints to which its components are subject. Once this point is clear, even William McDougall, staunch dualist and interactionist though he claimed to be, can be commended for reassessment as 'a purveyor of surprisingly new wine in misleadingly old bottles', who has 'anticipated many important contemporary views on cognition, social psychology and personality'."

The book treats of a variety of other topics - rather too great a variety, perhaps, for its coherence. A chapter on "Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) and Intellectual Imperialism"

Reign of terror

By Stanley Uys

JOY M. BRIDGMAN:
The Retreat of the Hereros
186pp. University of California Press. £9.
0 520 04113 5

Namibia was a German colony for only thirty-one years, from 1884 to 1915, but during that time it suffered an appalling experience: the slaughter of the Herero tribe but not only of the Herero tribe but also of the Nama (Hottentots) as well. It is not an episode with which many people outside southern Africa are familiar, but now Joy Bridgman has produced the fullest account to be published to date.

The revolt lasted from January 1904 to March 1907. Bridgman says casually figures are notoriously inaccurate, but he estimates the total of dead as probably greater than that of the South African War, the Crimean War, the Spanish-American War, the Seven Weeks War, or a dozen or more other conflicts fought between 1815 and 1915. The repeated frustrations of the German commanders finally drove them to pursue a war of annihilation. When General von Trotha replaced Major Theodor Loeferlin as commander, he announced: "It was and is my policy to use force with terrorism and even brutality. I shall annihilate the revolting tribes with streams of blood."

By European standards, says Bridgman, the behaviour of the Germans in South-West Africa (as it was known) could be described as at best harsh and at worst sadistic.

In this orgy of death it is not the ruthlessness of the soldiers or the viciousness of the settlers that is at stake; rather it is the cold-blooded efficiency of the bureaucrats. They knew all the revolting details of the slaughter, and they had the power to stop it; but while not actually condoning what was going on, they passively allowed the reign of terror to run its course unchecked. The colonial official saw in the elimination of the natives the quickest and most efficient solution to the problem of ruling South Africa.

The origins of the revolt were the familiar colonial ones: tribal lands ended up in white hands (with Samuel Maharero, who later became a skilled rebel leader, as the conduit and principal beneficiary). By 1903 the Hereros had lost a quarter of their lands, they were becoming impoverished and demoralized, the tribal way of life had been disrupted, the Hereros were in debt to usurious white traders, and white were guilty of brutality and racial discrimination towards the tribes (they called them "beetles").

The Hereros struck on January 12, 1904, when the German troops were occupied trying to suppress the Bonamagwa, a Hottentot tribe who had refused to register their firearms.

The Hereros numbered about 80,000, with no more than 4,000 warriors, not more than half of whom had rifles. By 1911 there were 15,130 left.

What happened to the other 65,000? Relatively few died in battle and some escaped into British territory. Many perished when they fled into the Omaheke desert, many others died in German concentration camps, but thousands were slaughtered by German patrols "who hunted them down like wild beasts".

Similarly, of 20,000 Hottentots in 1904, only 9,751 were alive in 1911. Battle losses were a small fraction of the casualties. Many died of disease and even more in prison camps. The survivors of these and other rebellious tribes were reduced to semi-slavery, prohibited from owning land or cattle and subject to forced labour. Only the Ovambos escaped this fate.

The war cost Germany 2,500 lives

State of contention

By Richard Rathbone

REGINALD H. GREEN, KIMMO KILJUNEN, MARIA-LISA KILJUNEN (Editors):
Namibia: The Last Colony
310pp. Longman. £15 (paperback). £5.95.
0 582 59734 X

Its poor agricultural potential and low population density conceal the fact that Namibia is not only the world's sixth largest diamond producer, but also a significant source of a variety of minerals that read like a list of the London Metal Exchange's spot prices. Copper, gold, lead, tungsten, vanadium, and zinc combine with its most vital asset, uranium, to make Namibia an impressive piece of real estate. Its inhabitants have suffered greatly both for its agricultural poverty and for its mineral potential.

British unwillingness to contemplate so unprofitable a colony left the way free for Germany to annex it in 1884. Scant returns and a recalcitrant population made for a brand of colonial repression which, in Africa, is matched only by the monstrous excesses of the Leopoldine Congo Free State. Colonial wars of such ferocity that they were tantamount to genocide were inflicted on the largely unarmoured African population. Under the Treaty of Versailles Germany lost South-West Africa and under a class C Mandate the territory was administered by South Africa. Since the Second World War South Africa has extended her role as trustee, and against the wishes of the United Nations virtually annexed the territory. Both the United Nations and the International Court of Justice have demanded South African withdrawal. South African attempts to grant to Namibia the kind of spurious "independence" bestowed upon "home-

lands" like Venda or Transkei have denied any role to the most significant resistant movement, the South-West African Peoples' Organization. SWAPO has been prevented from contesting elections and remains clandestine but undoubtedly is popular.

The appearance of this collection of essays is timely and for the most part welcome. Much of the literature on the territory is either polemical and ephemeral, or is tucked away in obscure learned journals; nothing so broadly based has been published since the mid-1960s. None the less this is a committed volume and none of the contributors pretend to neutrality. The most valuable sections of the book are undoubtedly the armed and well-presented analyses of the economy; separate essays by Reginald Green, Duncan Innes and Robert Chambers provide a sound, under-

standing of just what is being struggled over. Constantine Vintzos's piece on transhumant nomadism reminds us of the international scope of the problem. The economic sections are admirably supported by a statistical appendix, but unfortunately the bulk of the data was, by the time of publication, a good five years old. The human dimension is well treated, with chapters on the role of the church, on what it is like to be an Ovambo contract labourer, on liberation ideology, nationalist organization. There is also a transcript of an interview with SWAPO's president, Sam Nujoma, which took place two and half years ago. In this Mr Nujoma proves himself to be a statesman of international stature, skilled at avoiding the direct answer, but given the grim history laid out in this volume it would be hard to deny that his cause is just.

Further complicated by the fact that there have been at least five different armies - depending on how you define an army - involved in the war. Some of them are openly backed by one or other of the countries with which Chad has common borders - Libya, Sudan, the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Nigeria and Niger. And because of Libya's involvement, Egypt joins these six countries in their interest in the outcome of the war. So too does France, Chad's former colonial master, which on occasions has intervened militarily in the war.

The authors do little to help their discussion, much of which depends on an understanding of the country's geography, by failing to provide a map. They rightly ascribe the country's problems to the way in which it was arbitrarily cobbled together by the French at the beginning of this century. "Much of Chad's instability and violence," they write, "can be attributed to its belated emergence as an organized territory and to the rapidity of its political evolution." But these were problems shared by most of France's colonies in tropical Africa, and the authors do not provide sufficient explanation as to why the outcome should have been so particularly disastrous in Chad. Nor do they look back to the pre-colonial history of the country for explanation. The Ottoman Province of Tripoli's interests in the area are ignored as a motive for Libya's present-day ambitions there. The conquest of Kanem, Quaddal and Bagirmi by the Sudanese Rabeah, as the act of a ruthless Muslim slave ruler, is mentioned. No mention is made of the fact that he conquered under the Mahdist flag. And what is to be made of characterizations of Chad as a society, such as these: "The Touareg represented the epitome of tribalism, nomadism, and the Sultanates of central Chad embodied the ultimate Chadian concept of temporal combined with religious authority."

Moreover, the war itself is not even a clear-cut one between two peoples of different religious or political persuasion, or, indeed, of different regional or ethnic origin. The two current principal protagonists, Oukoukou and Habré, are both Touareg and Muslim; though from different clans and areas. Yet the origin of the war, and a factor that once united these two men, was the opposition of the Muslim north to domination by the Christian or animist south, particularly as represented by Tombalbaye, the country's president from 1960 until his assassination in 1975. The situation in Chad is

further complicated by the fact that there have been at least five different armies - depending on how you define an army - involved in the war. Some of them are openly backed by one or other of the countries with which Chad has common borders - Libya, Sudan, the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Nigeria and Niger. And because of Libya's involvement, Egypt joins these six countries in their interest in the outcome of the war. So too does France, Chad's former colonial master, which on occasions has intervened militarily in the war.

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The book has its faults. Words come easily to Professor Boden, and in places her style verges on the garrulous. Although she makes many valuable points against those who hope (or fear) that mechanistic analysis will debunk relatively little of its bulk, to her earlier exposure to "Artificial Intelligence and Natural Man" by the same publisher.

The drive for wealth

By J. K. Hyde

MARYIN B. BECKER:

Medieval Italy
Constraints and Creativity
242pp. Indiana University Press, £10.50
in 353 15294 1

During the past twenty years knowledge and understanding of the history and culture of fourteenth and fifteenth-century Florence have been based on by a distinguished band of (mainly American) historians whose spate of publications shows no sign of slackening. Marvin Becker, whose writings on fourteenth-century Florence are well known, has in this latest book directed his enquiries backward as far as the tenth and eleventh centuries in search of the roots of a society which he sees as characterized by a high degree of co-operation, disinterested affection and trust, exemplified by the widespread use of credit in public and private finance.

The instinct to turn back to the formative period of Italian civic institutions is certainly sound, particu-

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larly as this area has been relatively neglected by English-speaking historians. Anyone undertaking such a pilgrimage must be prepared for more impersonal and patchy source-material, which must be interpreted with great care. However a search which did not extend beyond the chronicles, legislation, legal records and the writings of the jurists would be sore to throw new light on the multitude of associations and societies formed by the rapidly expanding populations of the cities, among which the commune was in a dominant position from around the turn of the twelfth century. The elucidation of the wider aspects of civic culture in this period is hampered by the extraordinary lack of literary self-expression springing from communal Italy before the time of Dante's teacher Brunetto Latini, for there was nothing in northern Italy to compare with the lively pictures of contemporary life recorded in the Norman and Angevin courts and monasteries of the twelfth century.

Becker sees the Italian cities, "with their heightened social mobility, new wealth, far-flung trade, and elaborate credit operations" as the motors of change, but he seeks their effects not in communal institutions, which are hardly mentioned except in passing, but in the evolution of religious ideas which, he claims, show a movement from an archaic culture based on gift-exchange to an emphasis on holy poverty and practical charity which culminated in the Franciscans. It cannot be denied that such a thread can be traced in the ideas of Italian religious reformers, some of whom, like Peter Damian in the passage quoted on page 87, were consciously reacting against newfound affluence. However, at times Becker himself seems to doubt his ability to carry his readers with him, as when he writes "A discussion of

the miracles of the Virgin in conjunction with the miracles of coinage and credit can raise questions in the mind of even the most kindly disposed reader. Yet these two developments are not so disparate; each required risk-taking and the individual's stepping outside the bounds of traditional security; each required that the believer have confidence in the efficacy of abstract ties."

Readers will resist to suggestions of this kind according to their own dispositions; more objectively acceptable is the running together of poverty and preaching movements with their un-sacred and often lay outlook, and the drive towards the independence of the Church under the exclusive control of its own hierarchy, enjoying all its property under the protection of its own laws and stressing the functional inferiority of the laity. This can only be achieved by the very careful selection of evidence; it is not by chance that the poverty-mun Damian carries twenty-four entries in the index while the unwavering defender of clerical rights, Cardinal Humbert, is mentioned only once. His pupil Gregory VII scores six entries, appearing in the unexpected role of a believer in the "incarnational-creational perspective" attributed to St Anselm and as a promoter of lay action through his support of the Patriarch of Milan. Paschal II's offer to renounce the *regalia* in 1111 is highlighted but not his recantation and wholehearted endorsement of church property at the Lateran Council of 1116, although this is duly quoted in the passage from Miccoli cited as the source for this paragraph.

There was, in fact, no necessary connection between the attack on simony and lay investiture and opposition to church wealth and gift-exchange; the alliance of the papal

reformers with zealots for poverty was only sporadic and based not on common ideals but on common enemies. Becker's account blurs these differences, presumably because he believes that both movements can be reconciled at some deep level within the Zeitgeist. But the religious trends discussed so broadly were by no means exclusively Italian in either their origins or general reception; the hermits of northern France were at least as influential as those of northern Italy, and Abelard was a far more radical representative of the new theology than Anselm. How the French could be so deeply moved by the expansion of trade in the Italian communes is not made clear, while the exclusion of any Venetian contribution, despite her position at the forefront of economic development, remains a mystery.

If Becker's aim is to reveal the underlying consistencies behind what he calls "the problematic and ambiguous", his methods are ill-chosen for the achievement of this goal. Instead of a close reading and deep analysis of contemporary records, *Medieval Italy* is based on a very wide reading of secondary books and articles which are used to support views their authors certainly do not hold. For example, Becker paraphrases a paragraph of R. W. Southern's *St Anselm and his Biographer* which begins: "In the *Civitas Dei* Hincmar, despite Anselm, we see an opening to the genial and relaxed religious inspirations of the later Middle Ages", and ends "Anselm is resolutely monastic and conservative." Thus Becker claims that "Anselm captured the optimism and confidence of those times" although his imagery "was derived from a social order founded on subordination, obedience and complete submission." But the force of Southern's paragraph is in fact quite different: in the

lately suppressed central section he finds: "The moral force behind the *Civitas Dei* Hincmar is provided by even down to the smallest detail. He did not reject the rights of the Devil nor to give man a wider scope for self-expression. For that whole range of thought which appeals to man's creative instincts and sees fulfillment of the divine purpose in the development of human knowledge, Anselm had no use at all."

Where a major figure can be mis-represented in this way, at least one minor writer is transformed beyond recognition. Arrigo da Settignano was the author of a Latin poem tinging the loosely stoic consolations of philosophy in a time of unspecified adversity; the work was dedicated to the bishop of Florence and tradition has it that Arrigo was a priest. Yet Becker asserts that he wrote "to minister to the troubled laic conscience" and that, stemming from his poem, "a critique of stoicism gained strength." Finally, even when Becker's sources cite a contemporary text verbatim, there is no guarantee against misunderstanding. An extraordinary view is attributed to Ivo of Chartres: "So dangerous did he consider these wandering hermits and preachers that he believed only a few soldiers would be required to subvert the authority of Holy Mother Church." In fact the text reads "Ad paros solitaria solummodo Ecclesiam Dei pertinere contendunt." (They claim that the church of God belongs exclusively to a few soldiers).

The relationship between the cult of poverty and insecurity on the one hand and the drive for wealth and security on the other lies right at the heart of medieval Christianity, but it cannot be explored from bases as insecure as these.

tesching held that bodily illness had spiritual causes. It was the product of sin, cured by repentance or miraculous intervention. Or if it was not cured, then the sin must be too grave, the repentance too superficial, or the patient undergoing of a miracle. The great collections of miracle stories which are the principal source for the history of medieval health, are full of accounts of those who had consulted doctors in vain before resorting to the relics of the saints. At Rocamadour in Quercy, it was recorded with satisfaction in the late twelfth century that pilgrims arrived whose health had been ruined by the hot baths prescribed by the celebrated physicians of Montpellier.

In England in the twelfth century the medical profession was no more effective than it was elsewhere or at other times, but Edward J. Kealey makes it seem quite impressive. He achieves this partly by insisting that his is a "social" history of medicine, i.e. one with the medicine left out. The only aspect of medical techniques which he emphasizes are those which bear superficial resemblance to modern medicine, such as an early (and rather doubtful) case of physiotherapy at St Bartholomew's, Smithfield or the pills prescribed by an archdeacon of Chartres for a constipated friend ("when you have taken it... walk very slowly towards the privy").

The same impression of spurious modernity is conveyed by Professor Kealey's use of self-conscious anachronisms which he must know to be absurd in a medieval setting: expressions like "health services", "public health" or "social welfare policies", and tabulated statistics of hospital "beds" per thousand inhabitants which give formality to his guesses but as serious statistical exercises will not bear a moment's examination (few hospitals would have been furnished with beds anyway). Henry I and his family and friends may have been generous benefactors of hospitals, which (whatever Kealey may say) were homes for the sick and infirm, not places for treating them. It takes more than this to prove that his reign was a "new era in social welfare".

These conceits are the most noticeable but perhaps not the most important feature of Kealey's book, the fruit of some remarkable

Bad Blood

It's paint that's needed, that and nails and a coach-load of volunteers who'd whistle and tell mighty jokes and be done with all when the night's over. Till then the calendar's damage remains. I stand in the door and take count. The curtains hang askew; light escapes to the street to show there's someone here. A full moon floats above the drainpipe and a cat cries on an alp of junk. And whippers begin to place the walls from next door, from last year. One step inside and already it's started - bad blood throbs round a communal head.

Matthew Sweeney

OPERA

Verdi on the full scale

By Richard Osborne

JULIAN BUDDEN:
The Opera of Verdi:
Volume 3
From Don Carlos to Falstaff
546pp. Cassell, £21.
0360 307040 8

Ten years have elapsed since Julian Budden published the first volume of this pioneering study. Now, at last, the magnificent enterprise is complete, though not without a considerable aggrandizement of scale in the latter stages. The volume's background chapter, "Italian Opera 1870-90", is shorter than the essays in earlier volumes, but the operas themselves now command huge volumes. Where *Rigoletto*, in the project's infancy, was granted 34 pages and *La Traviata* 52, *Falstaff* has 115 pages, *Otello* 119. The point has already been anticipated by Mr Budden in his preface to Volume 2. By the mid-1850s Verdi was a man of property and fame, his working methods were more leisurely, his correspondence fuller (and better preserved by its recipients). His musical and dramatic structures more complex and subtly wrought. Theatre archives, too, reveal a growing accumulation of treasures, the *disposizioni sceniche* for many of the latest operas: though not, alas, for *Falstaff*.

The present volume begins with *Don Carlos* and it is a measure of Mr Budden's lucidity and dispatch that he manages to encompass its prodigious invention and wealth of alternative and superseded material of the five versions in a mere 150 pages. As before, the method is to lay before us the opera's literary and dramatic origins, the preparation of libretto and music, a full analysis of the score and its revisions, and conclusions which show a wide tolerance. On something like the textually complex *Insurrezione* sequence, Budden is happy to lay the alternatives before us. And here, Andrew Porter in a fine scholarly forage ("A Note on Princess Eboli", *Musical Times*, No. 1554, August 1972) presses an adjudication. Where positions are required Budden is a musicologist at his best. He prefers the five-act version, just ("even the four-act version feels its length"); the French version, on balance, if only because of the artificiality of the Italian text which the famous friendship duet brings the famous friendship duet rather closer to the kind of thing we might expect to hear "in any Welsh public house shortly before closing time".

The production book, liberally reproduced in the footnotes, and Budden's shrewd disentangling of the 1866, 1867, 1872, 1884, and 1886 versions cannot now go unheeded by politically-minded producers for whom *Don Carlos* is prime material for doctrinal exposition. Marxist producers who feel that the people's will is inviolable are duty-bound to revive the 1867 text; those who wish to preach about or against popular acclivity will prefer the politically less adventurous Posa of the 1884 text. It is a further measure of Budden's careful sifting of his materials in this fine chapter that there is plenty of room for the characteristic asides which are familiar from the earlier volumes: the cross-references to the small print of the nineteenth-century operative repertory, the occasional glimpses towards other composers such as Mozart, Brahms, Wagner (a persistent, disturbing presence like the organ pedal in the *Otello* storm), Holst and Stravinsky. Characteristically, the *Don Carlos* out-of-doors is placed, in a single paragraph, within the context of the treatment of public ceremony in nineteenth-century opera.

Like Wagner, is another beautiful presence throughout these pages. The play is considered again as a subject at the time of *Don Carlos*'s conception, but Verdi fears the need for spectacle will falsify the Shakespeare. He goes on to remark that, potentially, spectacular *Don Carlos* and *Cleopatra* with the sum-

the chiet characters, their personalities, and even their misfortunes arouse little sympathy". The truth is, *Cleopatra* would have involved giving a leading role to a mezzo-soprano, to another mendacious coquise in an Eholi style. As for *King Lear* where Verdi envisaged a *contralto* Fool it was too grand an undertaking ("magnificent, sublime, and full of pathos") and, besides, Verdi had already written his drama of father, daughter, fool, and king in *Rigoletto*.

If *Don Carlos* and *Aida* are Shakespearean in their mingling of the public world and private emotion and their rootiness in primary affections, what of the Shakespeare operas themselves? Anyone seeking in the 240 or so pages devoted to *Otello* and *Falstaff* the kind of debates on music and theatre which have so fascinated writers on Verdi from Shaw through to Auden, Kerman, and Conrad will not be immediately gratified. Indeed, at one point, Boito himself delivers a withering aside on the subject:

An opera is not a play; our art lives by elements unknown to spoken tragedy. An atmosphere that has been destroyed can be created all over again. Eight bars are enough to restore a sentiment to life; a rhythm can re-establish a character; music is the most omnipotent of all the arts; it has a logic all of its own, both freer and more rapid than the logic of spoken thought, and much more eloquent.

Yet so rich is the documentation, so shrewd are the numerous asides, that we are provided by Budden with much new material with which to prepare fresh debates on this perennially enthralling subject. A good deal of the background material, and its revelations of Verdi's and Boito's care in approaching Shakespeare, is familiar from Frank Walker's *The Man Verdi*. Like all good stories, though, the making of *Otello* and *Falstaff* hears re-telling. Our sense of Boito's regard for Shakespeare is reinforced by the revelations of the *Otello* production book where Boito's instructions to the singers are prefaced by the whole of Hamlet's address to the players. An address brilliantly complemented in Budden's chapter by the advice of the first *Otello*, Victor Maurel, to future *Otellos*. Vocal prowess as an end in itself is, he argues, not necessary: "Ce qui étonne [un public] et le captive toujours, c'est la justice, l'énergie et la variété des accents".

English critics have often been highly equivocal about *Otello*, choosing to arraign Verdi and Boito for misrepresentation rather than accepting the fact that it is, as Joseph Kerman has said, "decorous, rationalized, powerfully romantic"; written, as Budden finely shows, in the partial shadow of Rossini's *Otello* and under the powerful influence of Verdi's own primary image of Iago as the cultured Machiavel, the Caesar Borgia of romance as Shaw disparagingly put it. Desdemona may well be "an intrusively anxious domestic companion" (Peter Conrad's asseveration) but for Verdi she is, like Cordelia, Juliet, and Antigone, "the type of goodness, resignation, and self-sacrifice". Where Shakespeareans bridle at Boito's opportunism (his canny assembling of a text for the Act I love duet, for example), Budden is brilliantly perceptive, the analysis musical, scholarly and pragmatic. Though text and key structures are kept clearly before us, Budden is not afraid of subjective insights. The subdominant cadence in the words "sovi abbruttiti" almost suggests for him "to be believed in". The sudden steep modulation to C major is the "gateway to memory" and the central section of reminiscence, harmonized on high by the strings, Budden's recognition of this as a characteristic Verdian device in moments of thematic recall leads him to the brilliant deduction that such scoring is "no less appropriate for the summoning up of the remembrance of things past".



Giuseppe Verdi in 1844

based, might have further clarified a book which is rich in observations on this topic.

By and large, *Otello* thrives on the density of Budden's observations on harmonic thinking; *Falstaff* does so more intermittently. One charmed moment, the striking of midnight in Windsor Forest, is left, happily, to speak for itself in a full-page quotation. Nanetti's fairy song and, above all, the crepuscular close to the first scene of Act 3 are extensively analysed in writing which puts the sounds before one with a fine immediacy. The difficulties with which *Falstaff* confronts the analyst are its pace and the prodigality of its invention; reading about it can as easily inspire impatience as gratitude. Much of the comedy derives from the play of verbal and musical nuances. Budden quotes a letter by Verdi asking for verbal elasticity, clear syllables, fine breath control and plenty of verbal and musical attack, qualities alien to most singers of the time. Later, in another generous whole-page quotation, Budden takes the opera's denouement and Alice's Countess-like intervention in which Falstaff, Ford and Calus are all smilingly designated as fools. This, Budden avers, is a fine example of the masterly use Verdi makes of tonal relationships in conveying situations and tones of voice. Precisely so: my only regret is that the point was not made much earlier and does not inform, quite so readily, something like the analysis of the Act I Honour monologue.

Probably because the rehearsal books are missing, the chapter gives us no sustained commentary on the character of Falstaff. Coleridge saw Iago and Falstaff as being the opposite sides of the same coin and there are more points of comparison between the musical diction of Verdi's two characters than the present study chooses to engage. Auden's comments on Verdi's Falstaff might have been noted, and Peter Conrad's brilliant persuasive development of them: Falstaff the "wise and generous comic potentate" touching the wiles with his own lyrical prodigality. Interestingly, Budden sees Alice's soaring "so vi abbruttiti" as "splendid" as musical irony, a caricature of romantic excess; though his point is spoiled by a glaring mistake in the music-example.

Many of Budden's incidental insights are first-rate: his sense, for example, of the persistent role of dissonance, musically as well as dramatically, in the scene between Ford and Falstaff. I find the toppling horns, emblems of cuckoldry, at Falstaff's re-entry a comic highpoint, no mere cadential link, but I was lit by Budden's suggestion that the "after you" byway at the doorway is as much a joke about musical precedence, a witty aside on the old-

fashioned enbaletta's insistence on parity in the final bars of a duet. There is also a fine analysis of Fenton's woodland sonnet. What a previous writer, Spike Hughes, denies is a sonnet and designates as an aria, Budden finely elucidates, setting our minds to work on the difficulty of the sonnet as a musical model and on the sonnets of Galuppi, Wolf, and Britten. There are several fine insights into orchestration gleaned from the late Guglielmo Barblan's works on annotated proofs of the first edition of the score and Budden is sharply observant of Boito's deft word-play: Falstaff's punning response, "Ma salvaghi l'addomine" to the women's "Domine fallo casto", a fine moment musically which Auden terms "the only kind of funeral music we can associate with him... the mock requiem".

The volume offers a host of biographical insights. If it ends with the octogenarian Verdi writing his final masterpiece on a mere delighted impulse, it begins with the successful gentleman farmer at a low point in his artistic fortunes:

And if *Don Carlos* doesn't make money, put it aside and ask for *Le Roi de Lahore*, an opera of many virtues, an opera of our own day, not a human drama, eminently suited to this age of *verismo* in which there is not a scrap of verity.

Verismo is the emergent topic in the volume's historical interlude, "A Problem of Identity (Italian Opera 1870-90)". It is a chapter which is arguably more useful as the preface to a book on Puccini than an interlude in one on Verdi, but Budden writes elegantly about the rise of Germany, gives a vivid thumbnail sketch of the depression, financial and operatic, of the 1870s, vividly points Verdi's own gloom about the "inevitability" of a "terrible" Euro-

pean war, writes with tact and sensibility about Ponchielli and (I am happy to say) Catalani, whilst pointing us well not only *verismo*'s growth but the growth of a certain kind of illiteracy. (Puccini's remark is quoted: "A Romanza in regular metre brought on a semi-seizure".)

Only now, at the end of Volume 3, has Mr Budden given us his bibliography, having enforced a ten-year wait on anyone curious about the precise location of such things as Petrobelli's essay on *Moisè* and Nabucco (misattributed in Volume 1). Now we have it, it is full yet germane, and obviously valuable. One assumes that in spite of the price of the books (modest for what they offer) readers will be familiar with Budden's terminology; if not, a perusal of the opening chapters of Volume 1 is advised. The present volume has no preface; instead, there is a list of selected corrigenda to the earlier volumes. Minor errors in the printed text are regrettable but correctable. The index, though, strikes me as being too hurriedly prepared. To take a single example, Budden keeps Rossini's *Otello* for more consistently before the reader than the index allows.

Ten years ago Julian Budden set out to complete a study which would give respectability to Verdi studies. Not a book, he said, for the person - at once patronizing and defensive - who "adores *Il Trovatore*" and "con- who 'adores' Danny La Rue", but a book for those who happen to think Verdi a great musician; a man, what's more, whose opera dwell, in Schoenberg's phrase, "intensely in the sphere of basic human sentiments". Before Mr Budden, Verdian scholarship had been thorough but short-winded. This study, by contrast, is a towering undertaking and the final volume brings the great project magnificently home.

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Thunder-and-Lightning Polka

The fishmonger staring at the brass band
Offers us golden eyes from a cold slab
And alluvial instances of sea-flew. The birds

Which were dinosaurs once bled the stone hats
Of pala admirals. The bandmen puff their looping brass,
The music skating round and round its rinks

Of shiny tin, the hot trombones and the cool
And silvery horns, light
Sliding like the music through these pipes

And valves, curlicues and flaring tunnels,
Shells, instances of sonorous
Air-flow; we take a piece and present it

On the cold air to the staring ears
Of the sea fishmonger with his wat'ry pets, our part
Of the hyperensitive cabaret. The river

Slides past all the feet; opal mud
Full of sunshine, some dead eye
Carasses the watery catcomb. A hot

Mailed fish has greased windows in the paper,
We eat to music. Above,
A cool high mountain of piled snow,

Its halls stuffed with thunderwork like wardrobes
Of black schoolmesters' gowns and lightning-canes,
White-painted; it turns to one immense

Bleek gowu full of a booming voice from empty sleeves,
And shakes, and shakes its rain down,
And I kiss the thunder-water still booming in every drop

That strikes my face, I hear its fleshing brass.
The bandmen play on in their pavilion,
The instruments flesh with lightning,

Their music is full of rain, and fat, I will not go indoors,
My sleeves are wet and heavy
Like velvet; the trees are shaggy

With birds and lichen, singing in the leaves
In light tones and falling drops that break again
Like little thunder, and cold rain streams across

The wide golden eyes staring from the white slab.



Graupel Fils

Some five thousand thunderstorm cells
Ever rousing the earth's surface.
The rainbow steady in the thunder's shock.

The coldness of the clouds, crisp hard-edged ice.
Hail in particular is born in thunder, created
By the fast-twirling vortex of a storm,

The discs hail; by their inertia
Deepen the twist and cause the storm to blacken
With massifs of white hail, flint-cobbled fortresses

Falling. The softest, thickest, graupel hail.
Is what we prefer. They moved him to the tin veranda
So it might be cooler for him,

The hall tattooed his passing on the roof
Hollow and hard as military drums.
The little white sticks tapping out their rhythms,

The wind a wind of metal and white flags,
Then the graupel softened, alighting;
A dog of death mistletoe in the shower

On the tin roof all the dog noises,
The restless noises, the dog-noises,
The clicking nails, the short barks and coughs

Dragging its leash, snuffling out its master,
The dog of ice with jumping bones straddling the roof,
Licking its teeth, yowling

Our house in death, clean hailstone-and-thunder.

Peter Redgrove

Richard Davis

"...minding to have sent to Qasim Alexander Kitchin,
whom God took to his mercy the 23rd October last; and
before him departed Richard Davis, one of your meriners."
Hakluyt's *Principles of Voyages of the English Nation*,
Richard Johnson's voyage into Persia, 1566.

Our meriner's last landfall was this shore:
My namesake stood, four hundred years ago,
The empty Caspian at his back, and saw
A shieling view I intimately know -

Clean, distant air and noble poplar trees,
A marshy plain beyond which mountains rise,
The soot-lined and the sky - all this he saw -
The colours fresh and calm before his eyes.

Fresh as your feeding figure in my mind:
You look back to your little ship, then stare
As if the rehes you had hoped to find
Were somehow present in the limpid air.

You walk towards the limits of my sight -
I see you stumble in the dusty light.

Dick Davis

One of these Nights

A pregnant moon of August
Composes the roof-tops'
Unventilated slopes;
Dispenses to the dust
its milky balm. A blue
Buzzard blinks in the zoo.

Cashel and Angkor Wat
Are not more ghostly than
London now, its squares
None-pele in the moonlight,
its map thou art gaffers
A quest of desolation.

The grime of an ephemeral
Culture is swept clean
By the celestial hoover,
The refuse of an era
Consumed like colophane
in its impartial glare.

A train trembles deep
in the earth; vagrants sleep
Beside the revolving doors
Of vest department stores
Past whose alarm systems
The moonlight blandly streams.

A breeze-ruffled news-stand
Headlines the dole-queue,
The bleak no-longer-news
Of racism and inflation -
Strews in the rising wind
That heralds the cyclone.

It all happened before -
The Road to Wigan Pier,
The long road from Jarrow
To the tea-room at the Ritz;
Munich, the Phoney War,
The convoys and the Blitz.

One of these nights quiescent
Sirens will start to go -
A dog-howl reminiscent
Of forty years ago -
And sleepy people file
Down to the shelters while

Radiant warplanes come
Droning up the Thames from
Gravesend to Blackfriars,
Westminster and Mayfair,
Their incandescent flowers
Unfolding everywhere.

Next time will be the last -
But, safe in the underground
With the *Pleasure Post*,
We'll take out the guitar
And pass the gossamer round
The way we did before;
And 'lfs will begin' once more.

Derek Mahon

The analysis of want

By Michael Lipton

AMARTYA SEN:
Poverty and Famines
An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation
256pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £8.95.
0 19 828426 8

How severe is poverty? What causes famines? Amartya Sen proves that first-rate theorizing can illuminate these terrible, practical problems of Asia and Africa.

The "relatively" poor are always with us. Sen firmly rejects muddled attempts to conflate poverty with other evils, such as inequality or relative deprivation (to which his concessions are purely terminological). He largely accepts the sensible biological definition of absolute poverty: an income too small to buy a minimum normal diet (though a purgation of such an income, usually no more than a quarter, typically is diverted to purchases other than plain foods).

If, in a region, we count H heads below poverty-line income, we neglect intensity. If the proportion of poverty-line income by which the average poor person falls below it. Plainly H times I measures the effort needed to cure poverty - the numbers of extra "poverty-line incomes" required to eliminate it. Sen elegantly proves, on the basis of few but plausible assumptions, that H times I also measures severity of poverty, if all the poor are equal. Otherwise, using an easily measured indicator of inequality among the poor - the Gini coefficient - G - he measures poverty as $HI + I(1-H)G$.

Sen shows that this algebra is vitally related to the relief of suffering. In Bangladesh, the proportion of "absolute poor" fell from 76% in 1968 to 62% in 1975. A crude head-count suggests reduced severity. Yet in 1968 one in three of Bangladesh's absolute poor was ultra-poor, ie un-

able to afford more than 80% of the average caloric needs for a person of his or her age and activity-status; by 1975, two in three were. Sen's formulas can be used to show where poverty worsened, and by how much. They may thus suggest where relief efforts should be concentrated.

A cautionary word in defence of head-counts of the "ultra-poor", however, is needed. The ultra-poor, the bottom 10-15% in most of Asia and Africa, behave differently from the non-poor and the rather-poor. For example, though poorer farmers (as Sen himself explained in 1962) saturate land with more family labour than big farmers, and normally produce more per acre, the poorest, those with below (say) half an acre of land, tend to "drop out" and produce less per acre. The proportion of women and adolescents seeking work increases as families get poorer - but falls sharply among the poorest 10-15%. The poorest, too, are exceptionally averse to taking risks and non-innovative, besides being unresponsive to migration prospects that attract the merely poor. All this is borne out by the clinical evidence that 10-15% of the population of the Third World (not the hungry 50-60% claimed by some) is at serious risk of caloric under-nutrition. For these alone, so severe is their hunger, one of the best-established "laws" of social science - that as income rises the proportion spent on food, especially coarse food, falls - breaks down. These hungry ultra-poor are detached, by lethargy or aversion to risk-taking or ill-health, from the natural responses to "normal" poverty: innovation, better farming, more work. Different responses need different treatments. Hence head-counts, to assess the relative distribution of the ultra-poor, may be useful after all.

It is also exclusively the ultra-poor who die in famines. Sen's careful analysis of the famines in Bengal (1943), Ethiopia (Wollo, 1972-73; Herere, 1973-74; Sahel, 1972-73) and Bangladesh (1974), accordingly, rejects "food availability declines" (FAD) as an explanation. National

wide FAD, Sen shows, did not precede famine in Bengal or Bangladesh. He argues the same, rather less plausibly, for Ethiopia. Wollo clearly suffered a severe food shortage as drought hit peasant farmers. In the Sahel, he concedes "quite substantial" FAD; his data show the 1972-73 caloric intake per head as being 14% below 1961-65 norms in Mali and Upper Volta - sufficient to cause starvation among those who were ultra-poor to begin with, even if the decline were equally distributed. However, Sen argues, FAD nowhere explained famines, even if it preceded them; the true explanation is "FEE", failure of exchange entitlements.

People starve, Sen argues, because of sharp declines, not so much in food availability, as in entitlements to transform their assets into food. Humanitarianism alone is a sufficient asset in many rich and a few poor countries which have social-security systems; Chinese, Sri Lankans and Costa Ricans hardly ever starve, even in FAD years. In most poor countries, the poor may starve because of sharp declines in what they own (land, labour-power, equipment); in the amount of it, or of its product, that they can sell (eg when unemployment rises); in the price or wage they get for it; or in the amount of food that money can buy. Thus, in the 1974 Bangladesh famine, past alienation of land from the poor, plus dearer food and unemployment due to floods, meant that thousands starved. In the Herere and Sahel famines, herdsmen starved for want of cereals; usually they sell beasts to buy cheaper grains, but the 1973-74 droughts drove up grain prices, and slashed the value of their emaciated cattle. In rural Bengal in 1943, war inflation forced up food prices, while public policy gave Calcutta priority in food allocations.

These are convincingly presented as FEE's, failures of exchange entitlements, in trade. Less satisfying is the attempt to present the 1972 Wollo famine, and similar events, as "direct entitlement failures" because "the immediate influence affecting

starvation is the decline of food owned and grown by the family, rather than in the region as a whole". Robinson Crusoe could hardly be said to go hungry in a bad year because of a FEE, however direct. As specified by Sen, FEE covers so much that it is hard to imagine any misfortune not due to it. To define FAD only at country level, moreover, is to weaken it unduly: Wollo, the Northern Sahel, parts of Bengal, did suffer much severer FAD than the surrounding nation-states; especially in Africa, the nation seldom accurately defines a region's scope or limits - as regards trade, exchange, migration, family, or relief.

Sen has, at last, imposed a sensible structure on our analysis of these tragic events. But it is only a beginning. One remaining question, crucial to the impact and prevention of famine, is: why does a quite small FAD, in some times and places but not in others, tend to produce a major FEE and hence famine? We need to know whether minor food shortages, or rumours of them, drive up food prices much or little; and whether small declines in food output imply lost farm jobs for a few (who starve), or minor cutbacks in work-time for many.

Another key issue is the relationship between decline in food intake (whether due to FAD or FEE), initial intake level before the decline, and caloric requirements of basal metabolism, work, pregnancy, and the fight against disease. For some age-groups, at peak work seasons or where infections abound, a small reduction in caloric intake can fatally erode a precarious position; for others, in slack seasons and healthy places, a much larger proportionate reduction can mean discomfort and pain, but no serious injury. Sen's evidence on who starves in famines, and his closely-reasoned categorization of "failures of exchange entitlement", suggests that such policies can also be vital to the survival of the poor. Prosperous, expanding, subsistence-based farming is not a populist mirage, but a medium-term necessity.

and intakes - and that, within strict limits and over fairly short periods, an individual can adjust his caloric requirements to modest variations in what is available. Beyond these limits of "homeostatic adjustment", starvation (or obesity) threatens. Sen's economic theory of famine urgently requires integration with Sukhatme's account of metabolic and work responses. Then we will understand how policy interventions can "insure" against the risks of entitlement failures affecting people in especially vulnerable places, seasons, and categories (eg age-groups).

One policy conclusion already emerges from this perceptive book. It is that market integration and exchange - often stressed as the essence of development - can place poor people at serious risk of famine. Markets can give workers options after the rains fall, and can will feed to where the demand is; but markets can also destroy farmers induced to switch to cash crops just before the rains fall. Sen shows that rice producers, even sherecroppers, in West Bengal and Bangladesh were much less famine-prone than other occupational groups. Of the shift from food wages to cash wages, Sen writes, "More modern, perhaps, more vulnerable, certainly". The same may apply to much monetization and marketization.

For most Sahelians and Bangladeshis, food security does not mean big grain silos in remote elites (or the United States), but reliable access to coarse cereals. Access is most reliable when such cereals are grown with reliable water control - by family labour, on family land. We have long known that land distribution and micro-irrigation are efficient and just. Sen's evidence on who starves in famines, and his closely-reasoned categorization of "failures of exchange entitlement", suggests that such policies can also be vital to the survival of the poor. Prosperous, expanding, subsistence-based farming is not a populist mirage, but a medium-term necessity.

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